MUNSHI

HIS ART AND WORK

Volume II

FIFTY YEARS OF POLITICS

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Discussions with Gandhiji at Juhu

(L to R) *Kasturba Gandhiji Mathuradas Tricumji, Sardar Patel Munshi and Lilavati Munshi*

COMMEMORATION VOLUME

MUNSHI
His Art and Work

Volume II

FIFTY YEARS OF POLITICS

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CITIZENS' CELEBRATIONS COMMITTEE

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PREFACE

We have great pleasure in bringing out this volume as a homage to Shri K M Munshi whose seventieth birthday was celebrated on December 30, 1956

On the occasion of Shri Munshi's sixtieth birthday in 1946 some of his friends and admirers published a volume entitled "Munshi His Art and Work" Since then Shri Munshi has filled various high offices and we felt that it should be brought up-to-date and brief accounts of his activities as the Agent-General of the Government of India at Hyderabad the Food Minister of India and the Governor of Uttar Pradesh should be included in a survey of his life and work A short narrative of his early life has been added so that the readers may appreciate the struggles he had to face in his youth Some other chapters, such as Shri Munshi's place in Gujarati literature, and "Munshi and his message" have also been specially written for this edition

To keep the price of the book within the reach of the average reader it has been decided to publish it in a cheap edition and divide it into four volumes The first volume contains the story of Shri Munshi's early life, and his career as a lawyer, the second volume deals with his political activities, while the third and the fourth deal with his literary and cultural activities respectively How far this compartmental treatment of Shri Munshi's biography is successful, it is for the readers to judge We would only point out that his career has been so varied that it is difficult for any individual to describe it adequately though we hope some day and in the not too distant future a real biography of Shri Munshi will be written for the coming generations for whom his amazing career should serve as an inspiration

All the contributors of this and the following volumes have known Shri Munshi more or less intimately By a happy chance they come from different states of India to pay him their heartfelt tribute And that is as it should be For, his most cherished ideal in life has been the concept of Mother India, one and indivisible To Her worship he has dedicated his life and in all his activities, in his writings, speeches, social and political work, the same motif appears as the incessant refrain *Vande Mataram*

Editors

FIFTY YEARS OF POLITICS

CHAPTER I

EARLY FLIGHTS

I

THE Great Revolt of 1857 marks the close of one chapter and the beginning of another in the long and chequered history of India. The princely and the feudal elements which had dominated the Indian scene till then were slowly yielding the leadership of the country to a new English-educated middle class fed on the liberal principles of Mill and Burke. This new middle class were votaries of Western civilisation. They looked upon English rule over India as the merciful dispensation of an all-wise providence. In fact, even in presidential addresses at Congress sessions this attitude towards British overlordship was all too evident. But slowly there arose a few ardent souls like Tilak and Aurobindo who preached the gospel of Swaraj. To the early band of pioneers inspired by the gospel belongs K. M. Munshi. A genuine sympathy for the oppressed and the suppressed led him irresistibly into the vortex of politics.

Munshi's sympathy for the poor was pronounced even during his student days. When he accompanied his father on his rounds from house to house in Surat to assess house-tax, young Munshi instinctively reacted with tears in his eyes to the sight of poverty-stricken folk. In 1900 his father was engaged in famine relief work, and the scenes of starvation and death that Munshi saw left an indelible impression on him.

Coupled with this sympathy for the underdog, anti-British complexes took early root in his mind. Once, in his teens, Munshi's sense of self-respect received a rude

shock His father, then the Deputy Collector of Broach, went to the Collector's bungalow, taking his son along with him The new Collector would not tolerate carriages of Indians being brought inside the compound Munshi's father had therefore to get down from the carriage and walk up to the bungalow of the arrogant White officer Young Munshi's pride was wounded It was rubbed into his sensitive mind that the White people were after all the rulers and that his father was but a mere dependant Why should it be that before a member of the White ruling race the noblest of men—as he considered his father—should be so humiliated? No wonder Munshi nicknamed the Collector 'Brian De Bois Gilbert', the wicked Knight in Scott's *Ivanhoe* Even today, whenever colour prejudice and racial arrogance raise their ugly heads, Munshi's eyes glow with a fierce rage

Partly through heredity and caste associations and partly by his mother's recitals of the great Epics, young Munshi's cultural training was of the orthodox Hindu type With the impact of the modern college atmosphere, a transformation came over him In 1902-03, he read the Bible In 1907 he was greatly impressed by the teachings of Jesus At the College, he also read Dean Ferar's *Jesus Christ*, Renan's *Life of Christ,* Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man*, John Mill's *Liberty* and Carylye's *French Revolution* His study of the French Revolution was mainly responsible for his yearning for independence and equality

These childhood influences served to nurse in him the feeling of patriotic rage against the race to which the White Collector belonged But the zest for independence and equality received its greatest spurt from his personal experiences of the eighteenth session of the Congress He had read and heard a lot about the Congress and its leaders

like Dadabhoy Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta. He wanted to participate actively by enrolling himself as a Congress Volunteer—even against the wishes of his father, a straightforward official, overconscious of the fact that 'he was eating the salt of the Sircar'

There, at the Ahmedabad session of the Congress, he was impressed by the eloquence of Surendranath Bannerjee, its President He now knew the significance of the magic words 'we', 'our', 'our country', for the first time they were fused together to form the magic slogan 'my country' In Surendranath, young Munshi saw not merely a great leader but the embodiment of that beloved country of his His eloquence also instilled in young and ambitious Munshi a desire to acquire the art of speaking He now planned a programme for mastering the art He began to study chapters from Blair's *Belles Lettres*, and the speeches of Demosthenes and Cicero, of Chatham and Burke He memorised passages from the speeches of the Indian leaders and practised speaking after the style of Surendranath in the dark deserted college hall in the evenings or under the bridge on the banks of the Narmada Often he would stand before a mirror to co-ordinate his gestures, voice and facial expression

II

The Russo-Japanese war and the Partition of Bengal made young Munshi an ardent patriot The Russo-Japanese struggle and the victory of Japan showed that Asia was no longer weak or docile That thrilled many a young Asian mind Naturally it did not fail to thrill the mind of the young student of Baroda College. 'Asia for Asians' was a new gospel which quickly took

root in his heart That war sharpened his self-respect The dark skin was no longer inferior to the white Asia was awake at last India, too, was no longer going to be a British slave Munshi, like the student-world in general at that time, began to feel a new joy

A tidal wave of national resurgence was sweeping over the whole country and Munshi's youthful mind now started thinking of many a childish plan for setting the country free In 1905, seventeen year old Munshi was, to quote his own diary, 'materialist, ultra-reformist, ardent Congressman'

On 19th July 1905, the Partition of Bengal was announced On the 7th of August, the whole of Bengal took a national pledge to resist it But the partition was carried out on the 16th October Aurobindo Ghosh was then in Baroda, sometimes Professor in the College, at others secretary to the Gaekwar He had already collected around him a group of young admirers Through one of them, Munshi became a member of a secret society How could freedom be won but through a secret society like Italy's Carbonari? Deeply impressed by the personality of Aurobindo Ghosh, young Munshi, to use his own words, became one of 'those ardent revolutionaries who talked of Garibaldi and the French Revolution, and hoped to win India's freedom by a few hundred drachms of picric acid Munshi and other Aurobindonians even planned to meet secretly in the laboratory of the College to experiment on the preparation of a bomb'

Munshi however, had no taste for meeting in secret opening the locks of the laboratory with duplicate keys and mixing recipes It was alien to his nature Maybe as he confesses in his autobiography, he had not the requisite courage Somehow he did not quite respond to the 'revolutionary' urge of his friends

All along, however, during years 1905-1907, he was being inspired by the speeches and writings of Aurobindo Ghosh 'Believe in yourself Work for yourself Live for yourself The moment we decide to rule ourselves, our object will be accomplished' That was a 'divine message' to Munshi and the young students of the day, it was like the first sweet fragrance of spring, refreshing and enlivening

Once he met Aurobindo and asked him, not without some hesitation · "How can nationalism be cultivated?" Aurobindo pointed to a wall-map of India, and said

> Look at that map Learn to find in it the portrait of Bharatmata The cities, mountains, rivers and forests are the materials which go to make up Her body The people inhabiting the country are the cells which go to make up Her living tissues Our literature is Her memory and speech The spirit of Her culture is Her soul The happiness and freedom of Her children is Her salvation Behold Bharat as a living Mother and worship Her in the nine-fold way

The young aspirant was disappointed He had thought that Aurobindo would recommend a list of books for the study of nationalism

"But how could one meditate?" asked Munshi

"Have you read the words of Vivekananda?" he replied

'No", said Munshi

"Read his writings on Yoga and then you will understand what is meditation or *Dhyana*"

Munshi, though dissatisfied with the reply, turned to Vivekananda

Inspired by Aurobindo's new outlook on Nationalism, Munshi had his vision of the Mother and described it later

in the words of Sudarshana, the hero of his novel *Svapnadrashta*:

> I went home in November or December The whole world assumed a new shape. I began to see the Mother everywhere Men, institutions, their customs and manners all looked like her limbs My home, my caste, my village had a new meaning The lake, the river, the antiquated temples and mosques, even the dust of the village roads carried a secret, in them all was the Mother
>
> I took strolls in the early winter mornings I walked, as if spirit-haunted, between the serried rows of dark, silent houses standing on both sides of the dark and deserted road, and yet on them all was the light of my new vision The music of the distant jingling bells surging from the necks of unseen bullocks, the sweet sound of the grinding hand-mills; the chatter of women at the village well—all made the chill morning throb with rhythm, and in them all I found the grandeur of the Mother

After forty-five years Munshi with a lifetime of political experience proclaimed his faith in Nationalism as fresh as when Aurobindo Ghosh proclaimed it in 1904

> To those of us who have faith in Indian Nationalism, India is the Mother, not an estate to be divided Its driving force has been the joy of suffering for the sake of the Mother, the divine *ananda* of self-immolation for her freedom, the bliss of union in death with the forbears of our race who have done so before us We have felt almost physical delight in the touch of the soil from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin—the land of the Mother, in the kisses blown by the winds from Indian seas, in hearing Indian speech, music and poetry, wherever found, in seeing

> the familiar sites, habits and manners of life in every corner of it Pride in the Mother's past, anguish at her present servitude, passion for her future glory have been the breath of our life To us nationalism is the realisation of the Mother in the country, the contemplation, adoration and service of the Motherland as Divinity

Munshi's incursion into politics was welcomed by his mother who evinced great interest in public matters The son would freely talk to her about the court and the judges, and about politics, Surendranath, Tilak, Aurobindo, and the mother would lisen to him with deep interest She even identified herself with the ideals and actions of her only son She was the first to encourage the son's reformist zeal by setting an example herself In 1915 she a widow of sixty, came out into public and welcomed Lokamanya Tilak on behalf of the women of Broach On the evening of January 3, 1932, in spite of her age and physical weakness, she attended Gandhiji's prayers When Gandhiji was leaving the grounds he asked her whether she was prepared for her son's going to jail again With charming directness, she replied, "I have entrusted my son to you"

Munshi's interest in Arya Samaj dates from his early youth In 1905 or 1906 he wrote an article on Dayanand Saraswati in the course of which he observed

> If there be any sect in which Nationalism is taught, where the foundation of future Aryavarta is laid not by talk but by sacrifice, self-abnegation and enthusiasm, it is the Arya Samaj

He saw in Dayanand the spirit of resurgent Hinduism at its highest Dayanand is to him still one of the modern masters of Indian Culture

> He gave us the first programme of cultural reintegration, most of which has now been associated

with Nationalism, removal of caste distinction and untouchability, and equality of women, the highest scientific education essentially Indian, the use of Hindi as national language and the pursuit of Sanskrit as a predominant national influence, repudiation of Westernism, re-organisation of life on the basis of freedom as in Vedic times and a sturdy resistance to foreign rule and alien culture

In 1907 he was present at Surat when the Congress split into two, his sympathies were all with the Extremists led by Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh

Shortly after Munshi joined the bar the struggles of a young lawyer coupled with literary activities left him little time for politics

III

The first World War broke out in 1914 and there was an upsurge of political activities in India Munshi and Indulal Yajnik planned to bring out a journal to be called 'Satya' (Truth) but ultimately it appeared as *Navajivan ane Satya* (*The New Life and Truth*) under the editorship of Yajnik Shankarlal Banker financed it

At this time Munshi came to know Jamnadas Dwarkadas, a disciple of Mrs Besant Dwarkadas and Munshi attended the annual meeting of the Presidency Association of which Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was the Chairman Sir Pherozeshah was ill and could not attend the meeting, and no one else could present the annual accounts to the meeting This brought forth a volley of criticism from Munshi and Jamnadas who were later elected to the executive committee

It was about this time that Mrs Besant formulated

her famous scheme of Home-rule for India. To propagate her ideas she started an English weekly, the *Commonweal* in January 1915 and six months later the *New India* Mrs Besant's work was not progressing well and she invited some of her Theosophist disciples including Jamnadas Dwarkadas to augment the agitation for Home-rule and in September launched it herself in Bombay with her speech on 'India after the war' delivered at the Empire Theatre

This speech influenced Munshi who had already come into contact with Mrs Besant through Jamnadas Munshi Jamnadas Shankarlal and Yajnik decided to bring out an English weekly under the editorship of Munshi and Dwarkadas, and on November 27, 1915, the *Young India* was published with the blessings of V S Srinivasa Sastri and under the guidance of Mrs Besant

The Home-rule movement of Mrs Besant was slowly taking shape She met Lokamanya Tilak who practically agreed with her, but both of them were reluctant to form a new party for fear that, if they did so, the Congress would be chary of accepting Home-rule It was therefore decided that Mrs Besant should first win over the Congress to her ideas and that Lokamanya would then join the movement In case the Congress rejected Mrs Besant's scheme, Lokamanya would join her in forming a new party Munshi was one of the few persons who knew of this arrangement

On December 15, 1915 at a secret conference of leaders called by Mrs Besant was held at Chinabagh The older group was of the opinion that the Home-rule movement was not necessary and it was ultimately decided to postpone the issue for nine months If at the end of that period the Congress did not accept the Home-rule scheme, Mrs Besant would be free to start her own party

Soon there was a rift between Munshi and Shankarlal It was ultimately decided that Munshi would retire from the editorship of *Young India* after the next session of the Congress. This Congress session had as president Sir Satyendra Prasanna (later Lord) Sinha, a moderate of moderates Mrs Besant's scheme was not accepted

At this time Yajnik began to think of joining the Servants of India Society and Munshi's contributions to the *Navajivan ane Satya* dwindled

In 1915, Gandhiji returned from South Africa Munshi had heard of him for the first time in 1909 when Polak had told him that there was no leader in India fit to tie the shoe-laces of Gandhiji Munshi had at that time resented the remark In 1915 he met Gandhiji at a meeting arranged in his honour by the Gurjar Sabha presided over by Jinnah, but he was not much impressed

Munshi relates that at a reception given by Jehangir Petit in honour of Gandhiji, he was standing by the side of a fashionable Parsi lady As Gandhiji passed them barefooted in his short dhoti, Kathiavadi old style coat and head dress, the lady suppressing her laughter with some difficulty, exclaimed "Why! he looks just like my tailor" Munshi, however, was not entirely taken in by appearance In the introduction to his *Patanni Prabhuta* he wrote (1916) 'Gujarat is a giant tree rooted in the Yoga of Sri Krishna and branching into Dayanand and Gandhi' The publisher substituted Narmad's name for Dayanand's, but Munshi reverted to the original

IV

The period of nine months within which Congress was to consider the issue of Home-rule expired on August 1,

1916 As the Congress did not accept the goal, Lokamanya Tilak started the 'Indian Home-Rule League' in Bombay and Mrs Besant the 'All India Home-Rule League' in Madras in September. Shortly after, P. K. Telang, Jamnadas, and Seth Ratanshi called a meeting of Munshi and others as a result of which a branch of the 'All India Home-Rule League' was started in Bombay.

At this time Jinnah was a strident champion of Hindu-Muslim unity. He had come close to Lokamanya by successfully defending him in a case in the Bombay High Court, but his real triumph came during the Lucknow Congress, when the Congress accepted all the demands of Jinnah for a chimerical Hindu-Muslim unity.

In 1917, the report on the Mesopotamian muddle was published which showed the utter incapacity of the Government of India. Montagu criticised the Government of India as wooden and ante-diluvian and Col Wedgewood Benn, ever a friend of India, urged a large measure of self-government being given to Indians. There was discontent in India and in June 1917, Mrs Besant and many of her co-workers were arrested. This had repercussions all over the country, and in Bombay, the Home-rule League was re-constituted with Jinnah as President, Bahadurji, Jayakar, Bhulabhai Desai and Jamnadas as Vice-Presidents, Umar Sobhani and Shankarlal as Secretaries, Kanji Dwarkadas as Treasurer, and Chandrashankar, Vibhakar, Master and Munshi as members of the Working Committee. At this time Munshi was also connected with the *Bombay Chronicle* edited by B. G. Horniman.

Munshi and his friends began to preach the message of Home-Rule with great earnestness. Most days in the week they used to meet in the Shantaram Chawl in the evening, and during the week-ends two or three of them would go to Gujarat to preach the idea of Home-Rule,

which had already been made familiar in Maharashtra by Lokamanya. Munshi also wrote regularly, and his Gujarati article on Self-Government was printed and distributed by the Home-Rule League. It was later published in his book *Ketlak Lekho* (1919).

On August 20 Montagu, then Secretary of State for India, declared the British Government's policy of introducing gradual self-government in India. This vindicated in a way the stand taken by Mrs Besant, and the enthusiasm of her followers became intense. In September they gained a great political victory. Mrs Besant's All India Home-Rule League joined Lokamanya's Home-Rule League, and shortly afterwards captured the A I C C. Thus the Home-Rule Leaguers came to dominate the Congress.

In November 1917, Montagu, the Secretary of State came to India. The Bombay branch of the Home-Rule League presented him with a written representation drafted by a Committee consisting of Horniman, Umar Sobhani and Munshi.

From 1917, Munshi came close to Mrs Besant. As a boy he had heard Mrs Besant speaking at Broach and was in raptures when he heard her eloquent discourse on the past glory of India. Now he was glad to serve under the noble Englishwoman who was fighting for the freedom of Mother India. Mrs Besant's practical sense, devotion to duty, regular methods of work and keen political insight exercised great influence on Munshi.

All the while however, Gandhiji was silently doing his work from his *ashram* in Sabarmati established on May 25, 1915. In the same year he had prevented the levy of land-tax in Viramgam by a threat of *satyagraha*. In 1917, he stopped the system of indentured labour sent out from India, and concluded a triumphant *satyagraha* at Cham-

paran Next year he led another successful *satyagraha* at Kheda and he brought about a compromise between the owners and the labourers of the Ahmedabad Mills.

In his autobiography Munshi writes that a meeting was held at the residence of Jamnadas Dwarkadas to consider the propriety of attending a war-conference' called by the Governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, and helping the government in its war effort The meeting was attended by Lokamanya Tilak, Mrs Besant, Gandhiji, Jinnah and members of the Bombay branch of the Home Rule League which included Munshi Lokamanya proposed that they would help the government if the latter agreed to certain terms

When the conference opened Lokamanya began to stipulate the terms, but Lord Willingdon stopped him and he left the meeting Jinnah then got up and severely criticised the Government A few days later a meeting was held in the Shantaram Chawl to protest against Lord Willingdon's behaviour Gandhiji presided and for the first time came into direct contact with the Home-Rule Movement

After some time another public meeting was arranged at the Town hall with Lord Willingdon as President, and Jinnah Jayakar, Bhulabhai Desai and Horniman were invited to speak But as Lord Willingdon was to preside it was decided that no member of the Home-Rule League should attend it as a protest against Willingdon's insult of the Lokamanya Only Bhulabhai disagreed resigned from the Home-Rule League and attended the meeting Bhulabhai insisted that Munshi should also leave the Home-Rule League, but Munshi's relation with the organisation was not only very intimate but independent of Bhulabhai, so he refused to resign This led to a breach in his relations with Bhulabhai and it brought him closer to Jinnah

A meeting of the citizens of Bombay was called on December 11, 1918 to present an address to Lord Willingdon on the eve of his relinquishing the governorship This gave the Home-Rule Leaguers their chance Under the guidance of Jinnah, Munshi, Jamnadas, Chandrashankar, Master and others began to organise an opposition On December 11, at five in the morning they collected a crowd of about 15,000 in front of the Town Hall The other party had also collected some loyal people and workers from the mills Ultimately the Commissioner of Police came to terms with Jinnah and it was decided that the two parties would have equal representation inside the Town Hall

The meeting was due to be held at 5 P M So the richer community among the loyalists had their food brought in Munshi and Chhotubhai were sent outside and they collected a large amount of food of all sorts and sweets and had them distributed to everyone inside the hall irrespective of party, not forgetting the workers This had interesting results For at 5 p m the prominent citizens of Bombay began to troop in and Munshi and his friends began to shout slogans denouncing them, in which they were heartily joined by the workers Then the pro-address party proposed Sir Jamshedji Jeejibhoy as the President, the other party proposed P K Telang Pandemonium was let loose, the workers collected with so much trouble by the Government supporters heartily joined in shouting, 'Down with Willingdon' and 'No address', blissfully ignorant of what they were shouting about The meeting broke up and the opposition leaders spent the evening addressing crowds in different parts of the city To commemorate the event the citizens of Bombay subscribed for the Jinnah Hall

Shortly after, the annual Congress session was held at

Delhi, and Munshi attended it as a delegate from Bombay. The Delhi Congress adopted a resolution emphasising that nothing short of Dominion Status would meet Indian aspirations Mrs Besant's resolution passed previously at Bombay was thrown out This reacted unfavourably on the popularity of Mrs Besant, and Omar Sobhani, Shankarlal Banker, Jamnadas, Munshi and others were dissatisfied at her attitude Gandhiji at this time was slowly capturing the imagination of educated Indians, and to him they turned, electing him President of the All India Home-Rule League

V

Gandhiji soon made his position very clear A meeting was held at the office of Vaikunth Desai to consider the best means of opposing the Rowlatt Act The young Home-Rule Leaguers appeared to be prepared for Gandhiji's insistence on non-violence, for Munshi's notes, prepared for his speech in the debate, are preserved among his papers Parts of the speech ran 'Certain minds shrink from aggressive action as if it were sin They turn away from the delight of battle, look upon it as monstrous Love is foreign to political action Between nation and nation there may be justice or partiality, not love To say that boycott shows want of love is bad psychology and bad morality It is directed not against the individual but against the policy which exploits you If hatred is demoralising, it is stimulating too If hatred comes, let it come as a stimulus, as an awakening The issue of violence does not arise, it is a matter of expediency

'Violence which brings us in conflict with the rulers may not be expedient for a race circumscribed as ours, but

that violence is to be ruled out *per se* is not politics'.

Munshi was supported by several of his friends and the resolution supporting the boycott of British goods was passed

After the resolution was passed, Gandhiji quietly stated 'Gentlemen, I do not think I can continue to be your President any longer The vow of Swadeshi may be accepted for that is love, but boycott of British goods involves hatred and therefore, violence As you think otherwise, you will have to find another President' Munshi and his friends, who were budding democrats, were shocked They had thought that once they carried the resolution, the President would, as a loyal democrat, accept it The democrats surrendered

In 1919 Gandhiji began the non-cooperation movement and a meeting was held in Gujarat to consider the boycott of the legislatures Munshi, who had his own ideas of the boycott, did not join it, for he knew what to expect if he differed from Gandhiji, he contented himself with sending a note opposing the boycott

But the break with Gandhiji came when he tried to change the name of the Home-Rule League into Swarajya Sabha and substitute in the aims of the society, the words 'peaceful and legitimate means' for 'constitutional means'

On October 2 1920, a meeting of the Home-Rule League was held at the Gokuldas Market Hall Gandhiji presided and amongst those present were Pandit Motilal Nehru Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajagopalachari Jinnah and Jayakar brought an amendment to Gandhiji's original resolution but it was defeated Munshi's amendment supported by Harsiddhbhai Divetia (later Chief Justice of Saurashtra) was defeated by 45 votes to 20 Jinnah then proposed a third amendment that 'Swaraj means res-

ponsible government within the empire This was also defeated The original resolution was passed by a simple majority Jinnah then pointed out that according to the rules, the constitution could not be changed except by a three-fourths majority But Gandhiji as President over ruled Jinnah's objection on which he left the meeting followed by Munshi and others Three days later (October 5) following the lead of Jinnah and Jayakar, Munshi and 19 other members resigned from the Home-Rule League Letters were exchanged between Gandhiji and Jinnah, and Gandhiji met the group once more, but no reconciliation was possible

Though Jinnah and his friends including Munshi had decided to resign from the Congress now dominated by Gandhiji, they attended the Nagpur session There Munshi found that things had changed almost beyond recognition Ardent followers of Gandhiji dressed in Khaddar dominated the session They laughed at independence of opinion, and suppressed any deviation from the Gandhian way One friend asked him 'Why don't you wear Khadi?'' Munshi meekly replied ''I don't yet see its need I believe in Swadeshism'' 'Swadeshi is a courtesan, Khadi is the sati-wife Why can't you understand even this?'' To this, Munshi had no reply

Some friends then conveyed the message that Gandhiji was in search of men who would give up their profession and join the Vidyapith that he was founding at Ahmedabad, and that he would like to see Munshi in this connection Munshi had not acquired any faith in Gandhiji's leadership at that time and declined the honour of this interview

CHAPTER II

CONSTITUTIONAL OPPOSITION

I

THE politician in Munshi was fast maturing against the background of the Gandhian phenomenon, which in its sweep and grandeur held him firm in its grip though it did not absorb him 'Gandhiji was a phenomenon which compelled admiration,' he later wrote in *I Follow the Mahatma*, 'but to me he remained incomprehensible To me his principles appeared unconvincing, and his methods reactionary' This incomprehension on his part verged on fear So much so that when he was asked to see Gandhiji in connection with the Gujarat Vidyapith he was 'too afraid to go near him'

Munshi, however, had seen the star rising in the East He noted with genuine pride the great influence which Gandhiji was already wielding All Gujarat was astir with a new life under the leader's inspiration and he was consolidating the 'triple partnership' of the Gujarati politician, businessman and peasant And even the sceptic in Munshi could not resist the call to "put into port" It was possibly that irresistible call that won over his natural temerity and prompted him in 1926 to meet Gandhiji and ask him not to oblige certain groups in the Sahitya Parishad, the Gujarati Literary Conference, who wanted to exploit the Mahatma's name in their attempt to resist Munshi's reorganisation schemes

Those were the days when personal worries were already casting their shadows on Munshi's horizon, often blurring his vision Literary efforts served as a great re-

lief The literary man in him was already blossoming in Gujarati novels and dramas

In 1925, Munshi was elected a Fellow of the Bombay University and in 1926, to the Bombay Legislative Council on an independent ticket In the legislature constituted under the Montagu-Chemsford Reforms, the duty of an elected member was ordinarily confined to speech-making and his success to skill in elocution In debates, Munshi did exceedingly well, but he did more In association with Lalji Naranji he founded the Coalition Nationalist Party which became a formidable, though largely ineffective, force against the solid phalanx of the officials and the communalists He helped the then Minister of Education, Dewan Bahadur Harilal Desai, to frame and pilot the University Bill He did not relish his largely fruitless role in the Council, he was sometimes patted on the back by the Government, at other times condemned as 'unpractical and visionary'

With all this, looking back to that period of Munshi's life, the observing eye can discern a good record of legislative activity On the very day he was sworn in (in the Bombay Legislative Council) as the member for the University, the Home Minister had hardly finished his speech on the Aden Civil and Criminal Justice Amendment Act, when up rose the new member with his own amendment Basing himself on his experience as an advocate, he made the amendment the occasion for a plea for quicker and cheaper justice in Aden

II

Munshi's main contribution to Bombay legislation during the period of his membership of the Council was

of course the University Bill which in its later stages was actually piloted by him The Bombay University Act of 1928 was thus mainly the result of Munshi's unremitting labours which sometimes were thankless

For instance, when he defended the appointment of the Governor as the Chancellor instead of one elected by the Fellows of the University pseudo-democrats chided him One local paper went to the extent of writing a leading article under the title What is Mr Munshi's Vocation?' and an obliging critic sent a cutting of it to Munshi as a prize for his alleged 'somersaults

On this question Munshi showed how his contention was based on a thorough knowledge of the procedure in the best universities of the world In England, for example, he explained, the King retained the visitorial powers, while the elected Chancellor of a University there corresponded to the elected Vice-Chancellor here, consequently the vesting of such powers in the Governor, far from being anti-democratic, was in the best traditions of British democracy

Reporting Munshi's speech opposing the amendment for an elected Chancellor *The Times of India* wrote on July 27, 1927

> On the heels of this self-appointed representative of the University (Mr K F Nariman) came the actual representative, Mr Munshi, who in unhesitating terms referred to 'the abysmal ignorance' of those champions of democracy who knew nothing about the details of University education He urged with eloquence that the essence of democracy was that the power of the Executive must not be interfered with, and those who clamoured for the elective right in such a case as this did not understand the very elements of a democratic constitution For brevity,

clarity and cogency the speech of Mr Munshi was an excellent one and he certainly replied to all the arguments put forward by the opposition He stood there for a principle and cared nothing for any man, in strange contrast to the unusual attitude of Mr Nariman who seemed especially desirous of not getting into the bad books of His Excellency the Governor

It was during one such defence of the Bill s provisions that Munshi was twitted for his eloquent support to the University Bill which almost made it look as if he were himself its author The interlude is interesting enough to bear reproduction

> Noor Mahomed Is it relevant for the Honourable Member (Mr Munshi' on this side who is not a member of the Government, to describe what the policy of the Government is' I understand the Honorable Member representing the University is describing the policy of the Government as an authority on the subject I want to know whether he is qualified to do so?
>
> S K Bole Sir, he is trying to say what he would have said if he had been occupying the Government benches (laughter)

The retort for its promptness, and sharpness could have come from a Churchill

> K M Munshi I may tell my Hon friend that what he has been doing all these years for any measure whatsoever, we are prepared to do in connection with this beneficial measure Not only in this measure but in any measure where Government is prepared to fall in line with popular wishes W are sent here not for the purpose of jeopardising the interests of our constituencies not for the purpose of

> making Government impossible, not for the purpose of playing into the hands of those who are here for their own jobs We are here, Sir, to speak in the name of the progressive people of this Presidency, and it is our right to say to the Government. 'we agree with you' In spite of the taunts and jibes which we hear, it is our privilege to give—if Government has justified its existence by bringing forward beneficial measures—the assistance of the public side

The parliamentarian in Munshi did not believe in opposition for the sake of opposition His consciousness of his responsibilities towards the electorate did not allow him to indulge in theatricals, or, as he once said, in 'rhetorical acrobatics or championing lost causes' With the people's welfare as his sole concern, all his forensic skill, eloquence and shattering repartee were used now against the Government, now against the chronic oppositionists, with equal vehemence and often unequalled effect

On another occasion during the discussion on the University Bill, when a member came forward with an amendment seeking incorporation of the principle of communal representation in the University Bodies, Munshi's ability to destroy his opponent's case by ridicule quickly asserted itself 'If a Eurasian engine driver brings us to Poona today' said Munshi, 'tomorrow it must be the turn of the non-Brahmin and the day after the turn of the Mahomedan' Again, replying to the plea of those who would let the University be degraded from a shrine of learning to a bazaar for communal bargaining, and to the complaints of the communalists that the University was serving the selfish interests of a certain class of people, Munshi agreed, only to retort 'That class is the class of scholars, the class of educationists, irrespective of race or creed or colour or religion'

During the course of the heated debate in the Council, and later in life as one actively connected with the University, Munshi fought for the principle recognised by all liberal educationists all over the world, that, to quote his own words, 'the acquisition, spread and pursuit of knowledge is the only concern of the University', and that its controlling council should be a place for the best academicians only

III

Munshi was one of the distinguished public men whom the Government of Bombay appointed in March 1928 as a member of a committee 'to advise the Government regarding the steps which they are taking or will have to take in connection with the allegations of corruption made in the course of the Harvey-Nariman case or any other allegations of corruption in the Development Department' The Committee consisted of Sir Cowasji Jehangir (Chairman), K M Munshi, Husseinbhoy Laljee, Lalji Naranjee, K F Nariman and R D Bell (Secretary) Later Munshi was appointed its Chairman

The course of the famous Harvey-Nariman case was followed by the public with great interest not only because of the position which K F Nariman had come to occupy at that time as a popular leader, but also because of the extent to which he utilised the occasion to expose the corruption which was rampant in the Development Department

Lest we overlook Munshi's role as a trenchant critic in the Council, it is pertinent to recall his adjournment motion in connection with the Bombay riots in February 1929. After the Bardoli episode (referred to later) re-

turning triumphantly after his resignation and uncontested re-election, Munshi was not content to be a mere spectator of the Bombay riots of February 1929 In the Council he moved an adjournment motion 'for the purpose of discussing the disturbances in Bombay' The Hindu and Muslim members of the opposition came to an agreement demanding that a Committee of three members presided over by the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court should report on the origin and causes of the disturbances, the extent of damage to life and property and the steps, with reference to their adequacy and promptness, taken by the Government in dealing with the disturbances and in protecting life and property of the citizens But the then Home Member, J E B Hotson, declined to accept this suggestion and the motion, when put to vote, was carried both by Hindu and Muslim votes Thus the member who not long ago in connection with the University Bill was suspected of too great a friendliness for the Government was that day acclaimed as its strongest critic

Munshi's motion was, however, not utilised as merely an occasion for rhetorical denunciation or playing to the gallery His chief aim was to bring home to the Government the fact that the Government's acts during such large-scale disturbances should always be open to public scrutiny 'I consider it the duty of every Government in the civilised world', he said, 'after taking such steps as they took during the last riots in Bombay, to appoint an impartial tribunal to inquire into and report on the causes of such disturbances and to submit their own methods to its scrutiny'

As a result, a Riots Inquiry Committee was appointed under the chairmanship of Mr Justice Percival and the evidence given by Munshi before the Committee is proof

of his clear understanding of the problem and his unwillingness to mince matters. He traced the causes of the riots to (a) The communal policy of the British Government in India, and (b) Inaction of the Government before and during the riots.

Referring in his evidence to the first cause, Munshi spoke these prophetic words:

> So long as this policy continues, such riots will occur with growing frequency. The chain of such riots forms a painful process by which the policy of Government is driving the people of India to form themselves into two determined and fanatic camps of highly bellicose individuals. The policy, it may be suggested, is intended not to have this effect but that it is having this effect is indisputable.

Giving the minority community an undue preponderence in the counsels of the Government of Bombay, favouritism in the matter of jobs and partiality of the Government officials as a class to the aggressive claims of the minority constituted the Government's attitude which, he held, had developed a highly aggressive frame of mind among the Muslims. He testified in very minute details to the immediate effect of the communalist propaganda done by the Ali Brothers in Bombay, and to the manner in which the combination, direct or indirect between Muslim communalism and the White bureaucracy encouraged violence. The facile method of blaming the hooligans was discarded by him. He probed deeper and exposed the root causes which since became quite evident to every right-thinking observer of the cause of communal riots in the country. Nor was he disposed to shift the burden of bringing peace to the shoulders of the unarmed public. He said, 'I strongly hold the view that in times of riots, the policeman and the soldier should only have

right to attempt restoration of peace' And, besides the control of newspapers, he advocated more positive steps, 'That the steps taken by the authorities to restore law and order are not discriminative *per se* is not enough People must *feel* that they are not discriminative'

And it was given to Munshi eight years later to put those views into practice

Another activity to which he was called upon to contribute his quota was Primary and Secondary Education in the Province On 7th October, 1927 the Government of Bombay appointed him as a member of the Committee 'to consider and report on (a) the reorganisation of primary and secondary school course with a view to their proper co-ordination and the removal of the duplication of studies in the vernacular and English, and (b) the introduction of vocational and industrial training in primary and secondary schools' He was also appointed a member of the Physical Education Committee whose work in this sphere can be legitimately said to have inaugurated Bombay's scheme for physical education

It is not to be wondered at that Munshi's political career from 1920 to 1928 should seem to have suffered an eclipse Many reasons contributed to this Munshi could not surrender himself to the Gandhian influence, disciples rarely accept the gospel without an initial struggle Very few of the old Extremists accepted the leadership of the Mahatma, those who did like some of Lokamanya's followers were to part company with him soon Nor could Munshi join hands with the Liberals, the successors of the old Moderates, for Munshi's sympathies even in 1907 were with the Extremists led by Aurobindo Ghosh and Lokamanya Tilak

There was some chance of Munshi joining the Swarajist Party especially when Deshabandhu Chittaranjan

Das came to Bombay to woo the support of Jinnah and his friends But nothing came out of the negotiations as Jinnah insisted that the new party should have nothing to do with the Congress which continued to be dominated by Gandhiji

Apart from political considerations, Munshi was during this period going through an emotional crisis of great intensity, he could seek relief only in literary activity and increased attention to professional work In February 1926 he married Lilavati Sheth, this was a turning point in his life It was this happy marriage which was responsible for his seeking election to the Bombay Legislative Council later in the year

There was little chance of Munshi treading the path of official preferment in politics He was emotionally and temperamentally pledged to the freedom of the country Lilavati Munshi was also a social rebel and a political revolutionary Only a few years before, she had intended to join Gandhiji's ashram, which she would have done but for the bond which had sprung up between her and Munshi After their marriage, they were only waiting for a suitable opportunity to plunge into the vortex of politics with a bang, for they were incapable of doing anything with a whimper That opportunity presented itself when the Bardoli episode began

CHAPTER III

BARDOLI

I

BARDOLI is a small Taluka in Gujarat. In 1922 Gandhiji had selected this Taluka for his campaign of non-payment of taxes climaxing the Non-co-operation movement. But the Chauri Chaura tragedy compelled Gandhiji to avow his 'Himalayan blunder' and to withdraw Non-co-operation. Soon after, he was tried for sedition and sentenced to a long-term of imprisonment. Bardoli relapsed into somnolence. But this sleepy hollow proved to be curtain raiser of the great non-violent struggle for freedom.

In 1925 the land revenue of this place was enhanced without any justification. There were strident protests and elected members of the Bombay Legislative Council, particularly those representing Bardoli and its environs warmly espoused the peasants' cause in the legislature. In September 1927 Munshi moved the following resolution in the Legislative Council:

> This Council recommends to Government that the revised land revenue assessment in the Chorasi and Bardoli talukas of the Surat District, sanctioned by Government should not be given effect to.

The debate in the Council was surcharged with unreality and it was clear that the peasants of Bardoli could obtain no relief from the Council.

But Bardoli was already preparing to 'pioneer the way to Swaraj' as the late S. Satyamurty later wrote. Disillusioned by protests and prayers which brought no relief, the peasants and their leaders turned to the Gandhian technique of non-violent mass action. Sardar Val-

labhbhai Patel was persuaded to take up the leadership of the struggle and soon a campaign of non-payment of the enhanced land revenue was in full swing

During the initial stages of the struggle Munshi, like many others failed to realise the full significance of the movement and was not willing to throw away even the slender chances of doing some good turn in the legislature by co-operating with the Ministers He was, therefore, disinclined to join a campaign which, he feared, was bound to end in failure because of what he conceived to be its fantastic principle of non-violence.

In Munshi's case his association with the then Education Minister Dewan Bahadur Harilal Desai, on the issue of reorganising the primary education of the province acted as an additional deterrent As late as 19th April 1928 Harilal Desai wrote to him a letter which shows the cautious attitude usual with those in power

> Just as you had a threat from Mr I had one from asking me to exercise all my influence to solve the Bardoli tangle I am doing all I can Mr V J Patel * who is now in Bombay, may be pulling the strings for the latest development Things have to be done tactfully

Needless to say neither the cajolery from one side nor the cautious counsel from the other influenced Munshi much The fast moving events at Bardoli were reacting on his mind with increased vigour In May 1928, news from Bardoli was definitely disturbing Munshi was having a holiday at Panchgani and reports came to him of Pathan mercenaries being employed by the Government to strike terror into the minds of the Satyagrahis men and women Munshi found it difficult to keep quiet when

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* Vithalbhai J Patel, the President of Central Legislative Assembly

his brothers and sisters were facing the harshness of an unjust exercise of power in their struggle for their legitimate rights He decided to take up their case The lawyer in him could tolerate the rigours of the law but not the suspension of law or lawlessness by duly constituted authority

II

On May 27, 1928, Munshi wrote to Sir Leslie Wilson, then Governor To him the most urgent issue was the extraordinary measures taken by the Government to crush a peaceful agitation That letter started the correspondence, which while tracing the history of the negotiations that ended in the success of the Bardoli struggle, showed the reactions of the constitutionalist in Munshi to a problem that was fast becoming incapable of a constitutional solution

Referring to the Munshi-Governor correspondence, Mahadev Desai in his *Story of Bardoli* wrote later

> Among the public men who evinced an interest in the Bardoli question and tried to help the peasants' cause, Sjt K M Munshi's name deserves prominent mention We shall have to speak at length about him in a later chapter It is sufficient to note here that towards the end of May he addressed a number of letters to His Excellency Sir Leslie Wilson, and laid special emphasis on the fact that he had written the letters as a strict constitutionalist and not 'as a non-co-operator threatening non-payment of taxes ' It was perhaps because he strictly defined his position that he was able to draw the Governor out

Munshi's first letter to the Governor ran as follows

"Girivilas", Panchgani,
27th May, 1928

DEAR SIR LESLIE

I write this letter with reference to Bardoli affairs with great reluctance as personal appeals are very often considered out of place in matters which have assumed the proportions of a political controversy But I feel that I would be failing in my duty if I did not indicate the unwholesome aspect which matters there appear to be assuming

I did not accompany some of the members of the Legislative Council who waited upon you in this connection at Mahableshwar as I considered that with non-co-operators threatening non-payment of taxes, it was not for constitutionalists sympathising with such a movement to bring pressure on Your Excellency to accede to wishes backed by it In my humble opinion, however the demand for an impartial inquiry was neither excessive nor unreasonable, and concession in this behalf even now would be prompt and dignified, and, if I may venture to add, a highly judicious act on the part of Government, and in full accord with the sympathetic traditions of your regime

I address this letter to Your Excellency as the issue in Bardoli is altering its aspect Whether the wishes of the Bardoli ryots for an independent re-inquiry should be granted is one issue, whether the rights of Government are to be enforced at all costs against a peaceful agitation in respect of what the ryots consider a legitimate administrative grievance is another The line between the strictness of law and

the determined rigour of a vindictive assertion of rights is, as Your Excellency would agree at all times difficult to be maintained when one of the parties, as in the case of Government, has the power to enforce And I would expect Your Excellency's Government to do its utmost to maintain this line The employment of Pathans, Special Magistrates, the communal aspect which the payment of dues in made to assume the tales of molestation which are reported do look as if the officials are likely, may be unwittingly, to ignore this line, even if they have not done so up till now an action which, I am sure, must be farthest from Your Excellency's intentions in this matter

Hence it is that I wish to appeal to Your Excellency's statesmanship to take early measures to see that one issue may not be converted into another

Hoping to be excused for the trouble

Yours sincerely,
K M MUNSHI

The Governor was prompt in replying to Munshi --

Government House,
Mahableshwar
May 29 1928

My Dear Mr Munshi,

I received your letter of the 27th inst yesterday through Mr Kher and am glad you wrote to me on the Bardoli question which is being much misunderstood from every aspect

2 I understand from your letter—for you definitely say so—that those who believe in constitu-

tional government should take no part in a movement which threatens non-payment of taxes I regret to say that there is no doubt in my mind that in the case of Bardoli a definite attempt is being made to coerce Government by the use of the weapon of civil disobedience, and you can hardly be surprised if Government feels bound to take up such a challenge thrown down, although it is very deeply to be regretted that this means action which spells grave hardships for the unfortunate agriculturists in the Taluka but that is due to no fault of Government

3 A study of the facts and figures of the re-assessment must convince any fair-minded man that Government has acted more than reasonably and very generously in the question of re-assessment and I can assure you that had I any doubts as to the justice of the figures I should not hesitate to say so Every opportunity has been given, as in all cases of re-assessment of land values to those who took objection to them to bring forward their cases and all cases have been very carefully considered

4 There has been no vindictive assertion of rights on our part A great deal of untruth has been stated and written about the Pathans (of whom only about 40 are employed in the whole of the Bardoli Taluka) whom you mention If those who are preaching and practising civil disobedience had allowed the *Kheduts* and others to do their proper work it would not have been necessary to have brought anyone in from outside but they have not been so allowed and have been terrorized into refusal to carry out their duties The tales of molestation to which you allude are hopelessly exaggerated and it is impossible without an inner knowledge of

what is going on, for anyone to properly appreciate the situation

5 I think you know me well enough to realise that, if I thought that Government were in the wrong, or were acting harshly in any way, I would personally interfere at once My Government and I are fully acquainted with every aspect of the case, both from the Government point of view and from the point of view of those who are advising and organising this civil disobedience I also am fully aware of all the details of the question of reassessment

6 There is, however, a very large question involved in the action taken by those who have advised, and are advising, the unfortunate victims of this campaign, and, as a constitutionalist, I am sure you will support Government, which is unanimous in the action it is taking, consistent with a just assertion of its rights—to carry out its undoubted duty of upholding the authority of Government as against those who apparently claim that they can, with impunity, defy that authority If you are not satisfied at any time that Government is, in no way, acting vindictively or unfairly, I should be prepared to arrange for you a meeting with the Secretary, Revenue Department, who would gladly explain any question

7 With regard to your remarks about an impartial enquiry, I am convinced myself that no further enquiry could elicit any further facts, and I may point out that an almost impossible position will be reached if, after the fullest enquiry, after the objections to any re-assessment have been received, and after these have all been carefully considered, another enquiry in every case of re-assessment is to be undertaken In addition to the consideration

given to the Bardoli case, mentioned in para 3 above, it is a fact, however, that a further enquiry has been made, for it so happened that Mr Rieu, the Revenue Member, went on leave, and Mr Hatch has gone through all the papers with an entirely independent mind, and has come definitely to the conclusion, leaving aside rental values altogether (a basis to which objection has been taken), that increase of assessment proposed by Government is very low and that Government is more than justified, by the figures of prices, sales, etc. in increasing the assessment as it has done and that, if any further enquiry were to be made such enquiry would result in raising the assessment instead of lowering it I can assure you that there is not one member of Government who is not fully satisfied as to the justice of Government's action—and, in fact, I should really use the word generosity

8 The people in Bardoli know themselves that Government have been generous, and they want to pay They are now paying quietly, but dare not let it be known—for fear of persecution Many people are coming forward to buy the forfeited lands, and they would not do so if the assessment were so high as is made out

9 I have written you fully, as I want you to understand the situation

Yours sincerely,
LESLIE WILSON

III

To the Governor's long and laboured apologia, Munshi replied, maintaining his plea for an enquiry

111, Esplanade Road
Fort, Bombay,
1st June, 1928

MY DEAR SIR LESLIE,

I am much obliged to you for your detailed reply as well as the courtesy which underlies it The events which are happening in connection with Bardoli and the public feeling with which I came into contact after coming to Bombay, induce me once more to supplement the submissions which I made in my previous letter I do it in the hope that the views of those who do not believe in complete estrangement between the people and Government may not be unwelcome to you

2 I must confess to a keen sense of disappointment at the decision 'to see through' which, judging from Your Excellency's letter and the note published in yesterday's papers, Government appear to have arrived at It may be that the situation is not due to any fault of Government But, after all that is not everything This decision will result either in the elimination of the existing agriculturists in Bardoli or in bloodshed, and, in either case, will result if in nothing else in deep and lasting embitterment And I cannot help feeling that this result will be too disproportionate to the issue, viz, the demand for re-inquiry Even admitting what Your Excellency is pleased to state that the reassessment has

been generous, an opportunity of allowing it to be recognised as just should not have been denied.

3 I note Your Excellency's observation as regards the inquiry having been made as it happens by Mr Hatch in the absence of Mr Rieu, but that gives me greater confidence to urge it upon Your Excellency that if the results of this independent inquiry have been as Your Excellency says they are, then Government could not possibly have anything to lose by conceding the demand for an independent inquiry At the same time I need hardly impress upon Your Excellency the moral effect which such a concession will produce upon the people in general

4 I deeply deplore that when a little gesture of solicitude will perhaps end the matter Government have for the time being decided not to obtain anything but an unconditional surrender from the Bardoli people, and thus, at the instance of those for whom the penalties of Government have no dread, compel the weakest Taluka in Gujarat to learn the lessons of Civil Disobedience Some of us in the Council who were making attempts to bring about a sympathetic understanding between the Government and the party of progressive politicians in the Council regret this situation most as our efforts will be seriously handicapped

5 As regards the other issue which I consider graver, permit me respectfully to urge that no Indian constitutionalist however determined can look with equanimity when for the enforcement of ordinary *Japti* claims Government employs foreign mercenaries, who in our parts of the country have been more often than not associated with lawless activities May I draw Your Excellency's attention to the

fearful implications logically involved in this act, viz (a) that the Government with its vast resources cannot get decent Indians to work out its policy in this matter, and (b) that the Government even in a small revenue matter like this is prepared to resort to such an unusual agency to carry out its policy? These implications have a tendency to alter, as I have already submitted, the very nature of the controversy and I am afraid will so exasperate public feeling as to make it extremely difficult for any Indian entitled to any respect in public life to keep an open mind in the matter

6 I trust Your Excellency will excuse me the length of this letter and the freedom with which I have indulged in the privilege of expressing my point of view, and appreciate the motive which has compelled me to trespass upon your valuable time

Yours sincerely,
K M MUNSHI

Sir Leslie replied on 5th June offering to withdraw the Pathan police, the offer was no more than a Job's comfort·

Government House,
Mahableshwar,
5th June, 1928

Dear Mr Munshi,

I received your letter of the 1st June yesterday about Bardoli, and I am afraid that you evidently do not realise the position of Government I am very worried about this question, particularly about the position of the agriculturists, who, I know well, would all pay up the assessment, as many are now doing, if they were allowed to

2 Government have pursued, in the case of Bardoli, exactly the same procedure as in every other re-assessment. There have been many re-assessments put in force since I have been here and I ask myself: why has Bardoli been picked out for this effort in civil disobedience—for the present proceedings up there are nothing less. Why not Chorasi, for instance, in the same area, where the re-assessment was made at the same time and is even higher than that of Bardoli?

3 Why should Government give up its undoubtful right of administration to, as you suggest, the decision of some independent Committee? I am anxious to meet the situation in every way that is possible, but no Government can concede the right of private individuals to usurp the functions of Government, and no Government would be worth the name of Government which allowed such a thing to happen.

4 This is not a question of a 'little gesture of solicitude', but a question in which a matter of most important principle is involved and surely you must see this. We are asking for no unconditional surrender. We are only asking the people of one Taluka of the Presidency to obey the ordinary laws. If, when they have done so, they want further satisfaction than that which we have already tried to give them that there has been no injustice, I can see little difficulty in giving them that satisfaction. There has never been any case of re-assessment of land values similar to this before, where so much consideration and reconsideration has been given to the re-assessment and so many arguments listened to, and so much done to meet any reasonable objections

Nor has there ever been a case in which objection to paying increased assessment which objection naturally is felt by anyone who has to pay higher taxation in any form—has given rise to such steps against Government as have been taken in Bardoli

5 I am most anxious to take any step possible to Government to bring this present state of affairs to an end, for I am particularly anxious that no further hardships shall fall on the agriculturists themselves

6 Government has kept most strictly to all legal methods A great deal of misunderstanding has arisen about the Pathans, of whom only 25 are employed and those under the strict superintendence of Government officials Their conduct has been excellent, I am informed, in every way, and they were only so employed—being supplied for the work which they have been doing from Bombay—because the local *vethias* were not allowed to do their ordinary tasks However, to remove any misunderstanding these Pathans are now being removed, and Indians employed to do the work which they have been doing

7 I hope you will appreciate Government's position, and I feel confident that if you do, you will keep an open mind on this matter, and if you do this I feel sure also that you will do anything you can to assist Government in a difficult position—which is due to no fault of theirs

8 I might, incidentally, mention (but this is a minor point) that it is not necessarily a fact that all Pathans are non-Indians I would also add to the fourth paragraph above that of course, if, on re-examination of the assessment after the taxes had been paid it were found that any mistakes had

been made which resulted in unfairness to the cultivators remissions would be made, as has been done previously in one case which recurs to my memory

9 Should you desire to use this letter, or my former letter in any way, you are perfectly at liberty to do so Much misunderstanding has been created in this case All my colleagues and I are only anxious for a settlement and to avoid any suffering for the cultivators I have written a long letter to the President of the Indian Merchants Chamber, which explains all the steps which we took to endeavour to satisfy all the objections raised, and it may interest you to see a copy of that letter which I attach

10 Government is willing to consider any reasonable suggestions as you will have gathered from this letter

Yours sincerely
LESLIE WILSON

IX

The last para of the Governor s letter was a challenge If Munshi had to offer reasonable suggestions, he had to see things for himself So he visited Bardoli in June 1928 and saw for himself the forces at work and the issues at stake He witnessed the grand phenomenon of Gandhism in action The tremendous vitality released in the ordinary peasants of Bardoli by one whom Munshi was at one time disposed to look upon as a visionary impressed the visitor to such an extent as to influence him for the rest of his life The impact of this force was vividly described by Munshi later

For the first time I realized the tremendous power which Gandhiji possessed of transvaluing

values. He was an alchemist of life and had, above all, the unwavering self-confidence of a prophet Because of him, Truth and Non-violence—only words of moral import till then—had come to be accepted as principles of practical statesmanship Thick, unbleached Khadi had become the symbol of refinement and culture, and grim self-abnegation had come to the luxury-loving Intrigues had given way to fearlessness Fastidiousness had been transformed into unflinching heroism Effective organization had altered the basis of politics Little Bardoli had become a synonym for limitless heroism Who can escape the effects of this alchemy?

This alchemist, not unlike the ancient sage Dadhichi, knew the art of forging thunderbolts out of bones Our cowardice and unsteadiness, our helplessness and fatalism, passing through the fire of this discipline came out as satyagraha

After seeing what was happening in Bardoli in the name of land revenue rights of the Government, Munshi in an interview to the *Pioneer* repeated his earlier characterisation of the Bombay Land Revenue Code 'as the most unholy legislative enactment which the British Government placed on the Statute Book' But at the same time he was anxious not to let Bardoli become an all-India affair He warned the public against certain sections of the press who 'would turn Bardoli affair into a Russian revolution, invite armies and aeroplanes to destroy the harmless peasants and raise a political conflagration in the whole country'

Munshi's active association with Sardar, whom he on a later occasion described as 'the man of steel' began in the battlefield that was Bardoli As the chief evangelist of the Gandhian gospel of 'conquest of death', he put

fire into the peasants' souls and steeled them in the fight with the rare weapon of soul force Munshi later described Sardar's campaign in Bardoli

> Sardar, under the inspiration of his Master, gave new values to old beliefs All his life the peasant had slaved at his land, paying land revenue, and living under the fond delusion that the land was his But someone had now risen who would reassess the values of his life altogether
>
> Sardar preached Tillers of soil are not the dependants of Government, it is Government that subsists on them All fiats of authority need not be accepted by the people, it is Government which flourishes on popular will Better to die than to pay land revenue
>
> And every village in Bardoli swore by all it held sacred, that it would suffer extinction rather than pay this unjust levy of land revenue
>
> Under his direction, the leaders of Gujarat, trained in the school of Gandhiji, assumed the charge of various positions in accordance with their experience and calibre He stamped out differences of opinion, discussions and rivalries among them Different ashrams were converted into camps, the workers became leaders The word of Sardar became the gospel of Bardoli

Of Munshi's visit to Bardoli, Mahadev Desai later wrote 'It would have been more fortunate, if they (the interceders) all had visited Bardoli and acted on the evidence of their own eyes and ears and understanding One of them, however, did so to his lasting credit and put the result of his own inquiries before the public in a manner which at once arrested public attention and made Bardoli

the cynosure of all eyes in a greater degree than before We refer, of course to Sjt K M. Munshi'

Munshi saw in Bardoli the power of the mightiest empire on earth being challenged by mere men but with the still mightier weapon of soul force The terror of the Raj increased but with it also the tiny peasants' titanic will The Commissioner had characterised their leaders as 'a swarm of agitators living on the people of Bardoli' But the people themselves believed otherwise They were the heroes and heroines moulded by Gandhism out of mere clay The spirit of defiance was astir Enthusiasm was reaching the smallest, remotest corner of the villages Could it fail to react on the life and the positive personality of Munshi?

His aloofness now troubled him His isolation from the surging tide of popular revolt was artificial and could not last long or stand the test of his own self-analysis

The nature of the thoughts that agitated him then is thus described by him

> Why did I not resign my seat in the Council? Was it the unconscious lure of some official favour with which to satisfy my conceit? Or was it the fear of personal sufferings which association with Gandhiji implied? Was I justified in standing aloof from this heroic struggle? I hated myself for these conflicting emotions, threw mere prudence to the winds and decided to resign

The die was cast Munshi was drawn unexorably into the vortex of the Bardoli struggle He wrote to the Governor again on 17th June 1928 But this was not a continuation of the series which had ended with the Governor's call for 'reasonable suggestions' This time, he was not attempting to draw out the Governor into any fresh admissions In this letter he described what he saw

and expressed what he felt This letter, besides being of historical importance as giving an objective account of the Bardoli struggle, marks Munshi's slow conversion to the Gandhian faith The constitutionalist was being transformed into a non-violent revolutionary

No apology is necessary to quote in full this letter which, when published in the press at the time created a veritable storm in the country

17th June 1928

Your Excellency,

I am addressing this letter as a matter of painful duty because I had always thought that Your Excellency's intervention in the Bardoli matter which some of us were seeking would result in satisfactorily relieving the situation there

As Your Excellency knows I would be the last to assist any movement which threatens the existence of constitutional government but, in my humble opinion no Government in its fight even against Civil Disobedience is entitled to refuse to redress the legitimate grievances of the people to ignore the hardships which innocent victims of the fight have to undergo, or to assume a vindictive attitude If it does so a constitutionalist, however determined he may be is bound to be driven to the sad necessity of adopting an emphatic mode of expressing his protest

In the matter of Bardoli assessment from the commencement all that the Gujarat members of the Council wanted was an independent official re-inquiry A request

for re-inquiry is by far the mildest form of demand, which the mildest of men can formulate and the least mild of Governments can easily grant In a case where, as in the case of Bardoli, a report is based on figures which are obviously inaccurate, the most autocratic Government would have been expected to concede this demand as a matter of course The refusal of this demand has been the cause of all the unfortunate trouble

It may be that the revised assessment may in the end be proved to be not unfair But even if the assessment has been proper, the fact remains that Your Excellency's Government has adopted an attitude not consonant with any responsible form of civilised government They have declined a re-inquiry though pressed upon by every person concerned Satisfied with their own self-conscious generosity, they have refused an opportunity of allowing their own decision to be recognised as just, and, rather than yield, pursued a course which will end in the elimination of the existing agriculturists in Bardoli or in bloodshed, and certainly in widespread disaffection and misery That such a small issue, viz, the demand for re-inquiry, should be permitted to have such a disproportionate result is, to say the least, only possible in the case of a people so helpless and of a Government so powerful as in India

From personal investigation I am satisfied that those who are leading the movement in Bardoli are scrupulously averse to importing any political significance into their activities—unless Government drives them to do so In this case, so far, not even the staunchest non-co-operator has demanded anything but an independent inquiry with an opportunity to the people of the taluka to test Government figures and to submit their own The demand is for being allowed to co-operate in such an inquiry and cannot be considered as anything anti-Government or pro-non-

co-operation But in this case, Government appears to me to be desirous only to crush the non-co-operators who are organizing the spirit of protest in Bardoli and does not care whether in such a process a few thousand families are crushed out of existence

It is time that Government came to recognise that as an extreme measure of protest, Civil Disobedience—which panic-mongers describe as a seditious movement—has come to stay in the public life of India; that some of the leaders of the movement—however undesirable they may be considered—are the best brains and the noblest souls in this country, and that neither fear nor favour is likely to swerve them from their self-laid path of duty Under the circumstances it would be wise for Government to attempt to inspire people with confidence in its sense of justice rather than to overawe them by a show or exercise of coercive might

The cheap sneers of lofty bureaucrats the extraordinarily severe sentences for technical offences, the thunders of arrogant proclamations and the official sabre-rattling have ceased to excite anything but ridicule, and it is really regrettable that the Government of this Presidency which knew better methods in the highest days of non-co-operation should have permitted itself these obsolete methods, which are not likely to bring credit to Government nor to inspire feelings of loyalty in the people

As I already wrote to Your Excellency, at the instance of those for whom the penalties of Government have no dread, your Government is compelling the weakest taluka in Gujarat to learn the lessons of Civil Disobedience Official reports have prevented Your Excellency and Your Excellency's Government, I am afraid, from clearly realizing the situation there

In a large taluka like Bardoli, with 130 villages and

126,000 acres of arable land, 69 out of 90 *patels* and 11 out of 35 *talatis* have resigned

There, 80,000 men, women and children are inspired by a determined spirit of organized opposition

Your *japti* officer has to travel miles before he can get a shave

Your officer's car which got stuck would have remained in the mud but for Mr Vallabhbhai, the officially-styled agitator

Sardar Garda, to whom land worth thousands have been sold for a nominal amount, does not get even a scavanger for his house

The Collector gets no conveyance at the railway station unless one is given by Mr. Vallabhbhai's sanction

In a few villages which I visited, not a man or woman was either sorry for the attitude which he or she had adopted or shaken in the faith And as Mr Vallabhbhai passed through the villages, I saw men, women and children coming out with spontaneous homage, I saw illiterate women, old and young, in their tatters, painting his forehead with the mark of victory, laying at his feet, for their sacred cause, their hard-earned rupee or two and singing in their rustic accents songs of the 'misdeeds of the hapless Government'

And I had to confess to myself that the official reports of an artificial agitation forced on unwilling people are, to put it very mildly, grossly inaccurate Men laugh at your Government's attempts at terrorisation They have borne well, and are prepared to brave more The most polite form in which they refer to Mr Smart is as 'a tiger with a voracious appetite for buffaloes', and to the *japti* officer as a 'Chhota Commissioner' I dare not put on paper the most modest phrase which they reserve for that enterprising and ambitious Mr Almaula who, I wish, even

in the interests of Government, would be as sober as he is zealous I am writing this in the hope that personal experience of men like myself may at least awaken in Your Excellency and the members of your Government a desire to make personal investigation Spirit such as this, it would be unwise even for the British Government to attempt to deride or to crush

You may reduce 80,000 such determined men, women and children to starvation, you may, if you like, shoot them, but in these parts the prestige of Government, for which so much is being said and done, does not exist Prestige is not a thing which can be commanded but it has always to be deserved and earned

But the issue in Bardoli has in my opinion, changed The issue is no longer merely whether an independent re inquiry should be granted but whether the officials should be allowed to pursue their policy of vindictive enforcement of revenue claims at all costs The *japti* claims are more in the nature of civil rights, and one would have expected that the process of enforcing them would proceed with the dignity and the conscientiousness of judicial executions But I regret to have to say that Mr Smart or whichever official was responsible for it, has taken upon himself the role of a vindictive victor determined to spread the greatest measure of woe, and has only been prevented from carrying out his wishes by a stubborn and organized and, in view of the provocation given, highly self-controlled resistance offered by the people

For a total assessment of about Rs 700, one Veerchand has had lands of the value of between Rs 30,000 and Rs 40,000 forfeited

Another lot of 33 acres—any day worth about Rs 15,000 if not more—belonging to another was sold for Rs 161 As if this was not enough his cooking utensils

were attached for Rs 65, his pair of horses were for a nominal sum sold to a Khandesh Mahomedan and his nephew is being criminally prosecuted for an alleged false declaration

Cotton worth Rs 250 was sold for Rs 21

For failure to pay Rs 360, Dorabji had liquor worth about Rs 2,000 attached and his shop closed Further attachment followed A considerable part of the liquor was spilt and lost to the owner, the balance sold for an insignificant amount And yet out of Rs 315, Rs 114-8-6 were still shown as the balance and his lands, said to be worth Rs 30,000, were forfeited to satisfy this balance

Cotton purchased and paid for by a ginning factory is forfeited and its sale is threatened on account of the agriculturists who have already been paid off by the factory

These are but a few instances which I could look into for myself Innumerable instances of this kind I am prepared to prove before any tribunal

But this was not enough Any forfeiture of lands, however valuable, was considered insufficient to overawe the people, and a campaign was inaugurated against buffaloes, a campaign which has earned for Mr Smart the derisive epithet of a 'Buffalo-Tiger' The *japti* officer's fascination for buffaloes appears to have been extraordinary

Buffaloes were attached without any inquiry as to their owners Sometimes buffaloes of non-khatedars were attached, and restored only on payment for detention Buffaloes belonging to the subjects of Baroda State were attached A buffalo in the *thana* died for want of care. Another was cruelly beaten to a state of collapse

Many of the attachments, I heard, were irregular. Very often proper *panchanamas* were not made No ac-

counts of the property attached have been rendered. Attachments have been levied on exempted articles I pass over numerous cases of attachments of all sorts of articles, which were sold for ridiculously low prices

And in order to carry out attachments of buffaloes with due solemnity and terror, the ingenious device of calling in the Pathans was adopted Thanks to Your Excellency, they are gone now But that any Government enforcing civil claims should invoke the assistance of a class notorious for its lawless activity is a thing unheard of.

Did anyone in Government consider the moral effect of a *japti* officer, standing before a closed house and asking the Pathan to jump over the hedge or to scale a wall, with instructions to open the door forcibly if it was not open, or to take forcible possession of any article in the house?

The implications, as I stated before in my letter to Your Excellency, in the employment of Pathans were clear, viz,

(*a*) that the Government with its vast resources could not get decent Indians to work out its policy in this matter, and

(*b*) that Government in a small revenue matter like this was prepared to resort to such an unusual agency to carry out its policy

The Pathan terrorism did not succeed in its objective and the Government got all the discredit for having employed them And what has been the outcome of these methods?

There are 17,000 khatedars concerned in this matter They and their families go to make about 40,000 souls They, between them, have at least about 40 000 buffaloes which are loved by their owners with an affection, the

strength of which can only be appreciated by a born agriculturist. In order to save their beloved cattle, 40,000 men, women and children with these cattle have locked themselves up in small and insanitary houses for over three months As I passed through villages, silent, empty and deserted, with sentinels posted at different ends, as I saw women peeping through the barred window to see whether it was the arrival of the *japti* officer as, on being reassured, the doors were opened and I was taken inside, as I saw the darkness, the stench, the filth, and the men, women and children who had herded for months in the same room with their beloved cattle, miserable, ulcerated, grown whitish by disease, and as I heard their determination to remain in that condition for months rather than abandon their cattle to the tender mercies of the *japti* officer, I could not help thinking that the imagination which conceived the dire *japti* methods, the severity which had enforced them and the policy which had sanctioned them, were difficult to be found outside the pages of a history of medieval times

I grieve to say that I learnt the working of the administration of criminal law in these parts with a heavy heart That the machinery of criminal law should have been brought in to assist in the *japti* campaign is an extraordinary feature

Nineteen men have so far been given varying sentences most of which, to a man accustomed to the ordinary administration of criminal law, would appear frightful As for the evidence on which these sentences are based, the less said the better

A boy was sitting under a tree on a public road at a distance from the compound of the bungalow where the Collector had temporarily put up The bungalow itself is so far away from the spot that the boy could not see what

was passing inside the bungalow, and yet for the high crime of misdemeanour of sitting opposite a public officer's compound to watch the persons who were going in and out, three boys were sentenced each to Rs 50 fine or in lieu thereof two months' simple imprisonment And though one of the boys is in jail, within a few days, a buffalo, a calf and a cart belonging to the father of the boy were attached for realizing the fine of Rs 50.

An old and respected leader of Sarbhon forwarded a copy of the resolution passed by the villagers not to pay assessment to a *nazar* who happened to be the guardian of a ward, owning land in the taluka I heard that notice has been issued against this man for committing an offence under section 189 of the Indian Penal Code

Sir, I never gave credence to the stories which were reported till I went to the spot myself and made inquiries personally After this I have no hesitation in expressing my view that the methods adopted at Bardoli are not worthy of a Government with any pretensions to civilisation

Apart from the issue of the assessment, these methods have raised another issue Whether the assessment question is solved or not, it is impossible for anyone with the least notion of dignity or freedom to look on with indifference, when methods such as these are adopted to overawe people whose only crime has been a persistent clamour for the redress of an administrative grievance Your Excellency and apparently your Government have, with the usual confidence in the man on the spot, declined to believe these reports

With even the few materials at my disposal I am prepared to prove the facts which I have set out above And, whatever may happen to the question of the Bardoli

assessment, methods of this character require to be investigated and exposed

As citizens of the British Empire, Indians have, with others, the right to see that even law and order are enforced in a lawful and orderly manner

I am afraid it would be too much to ask Your Excellency's Government to investigate into these methods, but I and others who represent the people of this Presidency cannot look on with equanimity without examining these methods

I propose to write to a few members of the Legislative Council to assist me in an examination of the methods adopted, and from the little I saw, I can assure Your Excellency that the scrutiny will disclose facts which neither as a British statesman nor as a gentleman, you will be inclined either to justify or to exculpate

Your Excellency has been pleased to ask the assistance of constitutionalists in the fight against Civil Disobedience The constitutionalists in the Legislative Council, for the sake of their own principle, supported Government up to a point, but permit me to point out that Your Excellency's Government has perfected the policy of a 'compartmental' control of the Legislative Council, and, with the assistance of the non-politically-minded compartments, have reduced the politically-minded compartments to a hopeless unimportance In all matters, as in this revenue matter, the opinion of the politically-minded groups has been disregarded, their remonstrances ignored their appeals spurned Safe in its compartmental control of the Council, your Government has come to believe that to outvote popular groups is to stabilize Government

May I ask what has been the career of the controversy of the revenue assessment? The Joint Parliamentary Committee proposed that the main principles by which

land revenue is determined should be brought under the control of the Legislative Council. In 1924, the Legislative Council, by a majority, resolved that new assessment should not be levied till such a legislation has been brought into effect In 1927, the Council again resolved not to collect the enhanced assessment pending such legislation The Revenue Assessment Committee proposed an advisory committee of the Legislative Council And yet when the Hon Members of the Council for the Surat District, my friends Rao Bahadur Naik and Mr Shivdasani, concentrated their attack on Mr Anderson's transparently inaccurate report, their complaints were dismissed with a lofty contempt Their private entreaties failed By a sheer accident we could get a few minutes to discuss Bardoli in the Budget debate and all that we got in return was the garrulous levity of the Settlement Officer, whose boasted accuracy has become the laughing-stock of the Presidency We went to vote, and your Government with their usual skill in compartmental control succeeded for the time being in showing to the world that the politically-minded constitutionalists in the Council did not represent the view of the Council or the Presidency The vote so obtained has become so conveniently sacred that Governmet which defied the old resolutions when they represented popular opinion, now cannot so much as forget it, and even Earl Winterton has learnt to swear by it And now when the Bardoli people have tenaciously launched a campaign of Civil Disobedience, when they are proving that our attitude in the Council was not only right, but representative, backed by an overwhelming opinion in the Presidency, when they have exploded the hollowness of the vote which your Government manoeuvred in securing in the Council, when as a result of their activity your Government will have to grant more than what we in our

wildest moment in last February dreamt of obtaining from your Government, it will be less than human if in this struggle our sympathy or confidence can remain with your Government If today in this struggle, no constitutionalist worth the name can stand by your Government, the policy of your Government which has considered the politically-minded groups in the Council as a nuisance to be suffered and outvoted is alone responsible for it

What Rao Bahadur Naik wanted in February last, what he and Rao Saheb Dadubhai demanded in May last, if given then, would have been hailed with delight and made us feel that Government was ours, if what was demanded then was offered or given now, it would be rejected with scorn and contempt by persons who have outgrown the methods which we tried and whether your Government now concedes or coerces, it is not as a Government which is either genuinely sympathetic, or which we can by any stretch of imagination call ours

Sir, I approached you on Sunday last in the earnest hope that at least the repressive measures would be suspended and an impartial inquiry ordered My hopes do not appear to have been well-founded I learnt at Bardoli that over 280 armed police were going to be drafted at Bardoli Four Special Magistrates and Mr Healy as a Special Superintendent are henceforth to control the destinies of the Bardoli people In view of this attitude and in view of the circumstances I found at Bardoli, I would be untrue to the position of a representative of the graduates in the Presidency, if I did not invite them to give me a mandate on the following issues

(a) whether the Bardoli people are not entitled to an independent and open re-inquiry
(b) whether pending such inquiry recovery of enhanced assessment should not be suspended

(c) whether Government is justified in the methods it has adopted in recovering *japti* claims

In pre-Morley-Minto Government, Sir Gokuldas Parekh, a member of the then Legislative Council, could get an open inquiry into the revenue matters In pre Reform Government with one Indian member and with Morley-Minto Council, Kaira was dealt with sympathetically in spite of Civil Disobedience

In a cabinet with five Indians and a 'responsible' Government, we are helpless The Bombay Legislative Council is a representative institution where the voice of the representatives of the majority of people is invariably derided and overridden Your Excellency and Earl Winterton both relied upon the vote of this Legislative Council, and the only reply which lies in my power is to resign my seat in the Council and to appeal to my Presidency-wide constituency to indicate their verdict on these issues It is but just that in these extraordinary circumstances, I should only represent a constituency which appreciates the woes of Bardoli with the same intensity as I do

In closing, I may thankfully note the extreme courtesy and sympathy which you have always exhibited towards Bardoli as well as to those like me who have tried to represent its cause But in a system of Government like ours which is neither national nor personal, sympathy, even of the Head of Government is as ineffective as the wishes of the people

Yours Sincerely
K M MUNSHI

In the words of the late Mahadev Desai, this letter 'sent a thrill through the hearts of all who had any fellow feeling for their compatriots and placed the Bardoli question in the forefront of all questions engaging public at

tention' It was later printed and circulated amongst the members of the British Parliament

This letter has also great importance in the public life of Munshi It was really his letter of resignation from the Council as a protest against the Government's policy, and it was a challenge to the Government that he would seek re-election on the Bardoli issue Thus his political life took an entirely new turn He was later re-elected

VI

Several prominent members of the Legislative Council also resigned on the same issue They formed a committee to enquire into the coercive measures adopted by the Government Munshi was the Chairman, and B G Kher, later the Chief Minister of Bombay and India's High Commissioner in U K was Secretary Other members were Rao Bahadur Bhimbhai Naik, Dr M D D Gilder, who later became Minister of Public Health in Bombay, Shivdasani, Chandrachud and Husainbhai Lalji The Committee visited Bardoli week after week examining witnesses and collecting evidence, often running the risk of being arrested The reward of this hard work was that the very fact that there was an investigation reduced the rigour of repression It also gave the members an opportunity to study the whole land revenue policy of the British administration, a policy which as Munshi described, had as its principal feature, 'the rule not of law, not of well-defined statutory rights and obligations, but of the District Officer's discretion which was limited by the officer's knowledge of the district and coloured by his prejudices and passions, a discretion which more often than not was sure of being approved by the people at the head

of the executive, who, if an emergency arose, would be backed up by the vaunted might of the British Empire'.

The task of the Munshi Committee was to collect evidence and to find out the truth in the charges against the Government, and to expose the illegal processes which were being resorted to at Bardoli by a panicky Government It is possible that when years later, Munshi strenuously but vainly sought to incorporate amongst the Fundamental Laws of our Constitution the provision guaranteeing freedom of person and property being endangered 'except without a due process of law', he had his experiences at Bardoli in mind

However apart from his work as the Chairman of the Committee, Munshi tried with some success to enlist the support of public opinion in Britain through Shapurji Saklatwalla, M P, H S L Polak and Mardy Jones, who was for some time the editor of the *Indian Daily News* He also wrote to Lord Birkenhead, then Secretary of State for India to appraise him on a situation 'which will soon develop into an all-India affair and which may have very serious consequences'

Thus in his own way Munshi tried to solve the Bardoli problem, and to secure a just settlement The position of a peace-maker can never be easy Prospects of settlement seemed remote when the Government offered terms at Surat which Sardar Patel rejected Munshi, however, continued his efforts, which set against him some members of his party who were angry at a constitutionalist resorting to the 'unholy' camp of the Bardoli agitators The Education Minister, who had always been Munshi's friend and collaborator in the Council and outside, had earlier warned him against putting himself too much under the influence of Sardar Patel He wrote him that he was 'playing with fire', for, 'the ways of Vallabhbhai are

inscrutable like those of Providence Once in conversation the Minister asked Munshi 'Does Vallabhbhai rule over Gujarat that you should have resigned at his bidding?' Ultimately their long friendly association broke over the Bardoli affair

In Bardoli itself, rumour went that Lord Birkenhead the Secretary of State, was so upset with the developments at Bardoli and particularly with Munshi's correspondence with the Governor, that he had decided upon the military occupation of the whole district

However as Mahadev Desai wrote —'The rising tide of public awakening combined with Sjt Munshi's letter to His Excellency the Governor revealing the truth about Bardoli which had created a profound impression aroused many a sleeper from his deep slumbers' Many well meaning gentlemen out of sympathy with the ryots attempted to arrange a settlement But as these interceders failed to understand the significance of Gandhiji's work their efforts ended in failure Sardar Patel, in response to an invitation from the Commissioner of Surat met the Governor there on July 18, with several other satyagraha leaders But the efforts to bring about a compromise proved infructuous and the struggle continued

On July 23, the Governor declared, in his speech, while opening the Legislative Council, that if the members of the Surat district failed to fulfil his conditions 'within fourteen days from today,' dire consequences would follow His conditions were (1) to pay up the enhanced revenue and (2) to stop the satyagraha movement The Governor made it clear that the issue was, whether the writ of His Majesty the King Emperor is to run in a portion of his dominion' or not and the Government was prepared to meet it 'with all the powers which the Government possesses' As for the enquiry, the Governor said

that a full, open and independent enquiry could be held only after the due revenue had been paid On the same day, the Under Secretary of State for India declared in House of Commons, that the Government of Bombay had the full support of the Government of India

Some of the members of the Legislative Council interviewed the Governor and the members of the Government, who only reiterated the two conditions of abject surrender Munshi, who had been in consulation with Sir Chunilal Mehta (the Finance Member), rightly thought the better thing was to ascertain the minimum from Gandhiji and Vallabhbhai He therefore interviewed them and the former gladly gave him the following terms

A Pending the inquiry old assessment to be accepted

B Satyagrahis will call off the campaign on the inquiry being announced

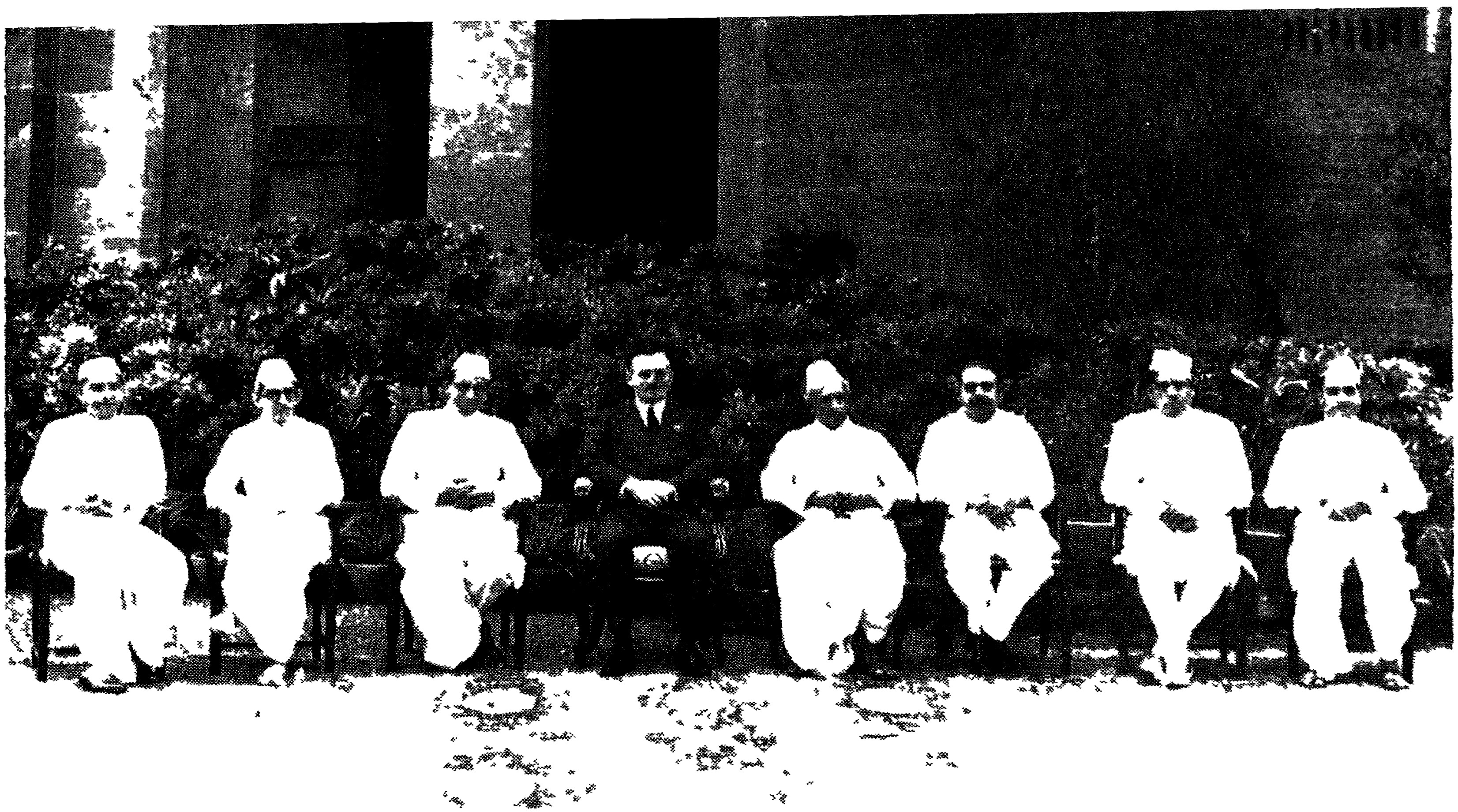
C Enquiry to be an open judicial one by a judicial officer alone or assisted by a revenue officer with terms of reference as given below, and under which the people will have a right to lead and test evidence with the help of counsel if necessary

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Firstly—To enquire into and report upon the complaint of the people of Bardoli and Valod

(a) That the enhancement of revenue recently made is not warranted in terms of the Land Revenue Code

(b) That the reports and notifications accessible to the public do not contain sufficient data warranting the enhancement and that some of the data given are wrong



The first Bombay Congress Ministry, 1937-1939
L to R *Morarji Desai, Munshi B G Kher, Sir Roger Lumley (Governor), A B Latthe, M D D Gilder, M Y Nurie and L M Patil*

"Beach House",
Napean Sea Road,
Bombay, 29th July 1928

My dear Vallabhbhai,

On my return I had strenuous times R M Bhatt saw me at the station He has received a letter from H E. saying his deposit should come from the Surat members

About the interview I am posting with this a summary First, the attitude was: 'I have demanded an acceptance of my ultimatum from Surat members I will take that and nothing else' After I stated that, if I was considered an intruder there was no need to take his time, things cooled down

His attitude was no more negotiations at all, particularly with you or with any one on your behalf Surat members alone must give the undertaking, without any conditions, as they alone will be recognised Submission must be made, and then the concession would be granted So there was no basis for any *settlement* between the two parties

Then we went through the terms There is very little difference as you will see (a) No compensation and (b) all talatis, patels will not be reinstated, but individual cases only will be considered But again and again the *sine qua non* was unconditional acceptance of the ultimatum first within the time given After an hour and quarter we parted

My impressions are that for a compromise at this stage

(1) Everything would be given by way of grace but Satyagrahis should be made to show that they have submitted

(2) the ultimatum was to be accepted by the Surat

Members unconditionally, and compliance has to be made before anything could be done,

(3) Satyagrahis will not be recognised or dealt with directly

(4) Surat members, the constitutional spokesmen of Bardoli, to undertake the payment of the revised assessment getting the difference from Bhatt or any one These appear to be the conditions imposed by the S of S

Then I left the discussion in such a manner as could be resumed if necessary and promised to see Rieu as to the form of the letter which H E wanted, but I confess I felt exasperated at this attitude

When I went to our friends they had their opportunity The general feeling was that I had made a mistake in seeing you and G, and H E, that . and .. .. could any day get better terms from Rieu, that compromise should be tried through Rieu or Chunilal; that there was nothing wrong in Surat Members giving Bhatt's money through their agency, that the awful fate kept in store by Government should be averted at any cost

I told them what I thought I felt that submission to the ultimatum in the form demanded was humiliating, that for you, having rejected better terms at Surat, to accept the terms now at the point of bayonet and without recognising your existence, was a blow which would cut at the prestige of public life in India

All that now needs to be done by me was to incorporate the minimum that Gandhiji gave me and what Government was going to give in so far as it was consistent, in a dignified letter and send it to Government, promising that if this request was granted they will see that Satyagraha was called off I have reduced this to writing and sent a copy to and Nobody likes this

idea and .. ...want to carry on negotiations in their own way ......is wisely cautious and watching Surat members and Nariman may come and see you

I am unfortunately in complete disagreement with these gentlemen I find that my notions of prestige of public life and the dignity of your movement are not shared by many of our friends They feel that my attitude hampers and is likely to hamper the settlement, that my interference is more likely to prevent even you from being reasonable, and that any of them seeing you and coming to Poona with Mr Lalji to ratify what he does, will be conducive to a happier end I may be wrong but somehow I cannot reconcile the courage and the nobility with which you have conducted the movement and our utterances and resignations with the efforts which some of us are now making to accommodate ourselves to the ultimatum delivered I may however assure you that if no compromise is made, the consequences to you and to Gujarat will be terrible, as the movement is likely to be dealt with as a rebellion

Unless you require me in further negotiations, I would rather not worry our friends at Poona, who as they say, have the interests of the peasants more at heart than everybody and who are engaging themselves in finding out a solution On Wednesday morning I am going back and I hope they would have found a way I am sending them (a) a copy of my impressions of H E 's interview (b) the minimum terms reduced to writing in the form of a letter to be addressed by Surat members I am also sending Gandhiji this letter and the impressions and the minimum terms

Yours sincerely,
K M MUNSHI

To Gandhiji, Munshi wrote in Gujarati, 'Like Hira, I went to Ghogha and came back', a Gujarati idiom which meant that he had been on a fool's errand Promptly came the reply 'Hira (diamond) has come back, but has not lost its lustre '

VII

On July 29 and 30 some of the Gujarat members wrote to and secured from Dewan Bahadur Hiralal a letter setting out certain terms on which the Government would be prepared to come to a settlement Hirabhai Amin, a member of the Council, went with these terms to Sardar Patel In Munshi's opinion, however, those terms did not differ substantially from the terms offered by the Governor at Surat to which there had been added a condition that the Surat members should give an undertaking

Amin and K F Nariman who had accompanied Amin, brought from Gandhiji the same terms which Munshi had received from him the week before Lalji Naranji, armed with these terms, put himself in communication with Sir Chunilal Mehta, the Finance Member

Soon, however, Sardar Patel received a telegram from Rao Saheb Dadubhai Desai on behalf of the Gujarat members inviting him to come to Poona The invitation was sent with the consent, if not at the instance, of Sir Chunilal Mehta for the same telegram invited Sardar to be Sir Chunilal's guest So Sardar went to Poona on August 3 joined by Munshi from Bombay, and throughout that day and more than half the night held long conferences with Sir Chunilal Mehta

The stumbling block was the Government's insistence that the M L C's from Surat should write to the Govern-

ment 'We are glad to be able to say that we are in a position to inform Government that the conditions laid down by His Excellency the Governor in his opening speech to the Council dated 23rd July will be fulfilled'.

Sardar Patel refused to accept this condition because apart from other considerations, the Surat members were not in a position to fulfill the condition Sir Chunilal however was adament Munshi who was with Sardar during the talks then produced another draft, which Sir Chunilal rejected Fearing that there would again be an impasse, Munshi started discussing the other conditions As a result of this discussion, agreement was reached at a very late hour in the night about the other conditions, namely restoration of lands release of prisoners and reinstatement of the talatis Sardar Patel waived the clause about indemnity if there was agreement on all the other points But the main point was the letter affecting the Surat members which seemed impossible to solve So Munshi left at a late hour hoping that they might be able to arrive at some satisfactory result On this, practically the conference adjourned, but in the early hours of the morning Mahadev Desai woke up Sardar Patel and induced him to accept the condition of the Government regarding the letter to be written by the Surat members

Thus the Bardoli question was settled, but Munshi's work was not yet finished At the instance of Sir Chunilal Mehta Munshi went to Surat to get the sold lands restored to the original owners A complicated procedure was adopted whereby the Government without cancelling the sales would be able to restore the lands to their original owners It was agreed that the land should be acquired from the purchasers at their cost price which represented roughly two years revised assessment 1927-29 The original holders whose lands were

forfeited and sold had saved the revenue for the year 1927-28 So, the only excess which they had to pay for getting back their land was the balance, that is the revenue for the year 1928-29 This amount, the original owners received from the Government, who after deducting the revenue for 1927-28 was to transfer the balance of the sale proceeds to the credit of the original owners Thus the Government did not have to cancel the sales and the original owners had not to pay any money to get back their lands By this process Munshi, with the assistance of the Collector, was able to get the lands reconveyed to their original owners.

Thus ended the *Satyagraha* of Bardoli But on Munshi's public life it had brought a great change His belief in constitutional progress was gone He had seen British bureaucracy at its worst He had also seen the peasants at their best Not only Munshi but many if not most of his class believed at that time that the masses were incapable of undertaking any political action Gandhiji and Sardar Patel demonstrated the fallacy of such conceptions and showed that, under proper leadership, the peasants were capable of fighting a mighty administration. While many doubters still remained, Munshi from now on never lost his faith in the methods of Gandhiji's Satyagraha

Munshi also gained the confidence and affection of Sardar Patel which remained undimmed till the latter's death This association with Sardar proved invaluable for his political career

It was at this time that Munshi coined the phrase *Mahayana* Gandhism to describe the Gandhian School shaped by Sardar Patel, as contrasted with that of the Gandhian purists whom he called the followers of *Hinayana* Gandhism Munshi by temperament has ever remained a *Mahayanist*

CHAPTER IV

SWARAJ STRUGGLE

I

BARDOLI did not convert Munshi from a constitutional lawyer into a crusading Satyagrahi. The struggle was of course something more than a mere local agrarian fight led by a village Hampden, it was an important landmark in the history of India's struggle for Swaraj The suspension of the non-co-operation campaign in 1922 had brought about a sense of frustration and the imposing facade of Hindu-Muslim unity cemented by Gandhiji on the Khilafat issue had all but crumbled, and for the next few years Hindu-Muslim riots were the order of the day throughout Northern India The Swarajists party organised by Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das and Pandit Motilal Nehru had, in the initial stages, shown promise of stepping into the breach and offering battle to the bureaucracy on the Parnellite model The death of Deshabandhu in 1925, the formation of the Responsive Co-operationist party in 1926, the defection of prominent Swarajists like Dr Suhrawardy in Bengal and S B Tambe in Central Provinces had reduced the solid phalanx of the Swarajist Party into a heterogeneous collection of parliamentary aspirants

The youth of the country, tired of the squabblings between the leaders and the infructuous work within the legislatures, once again felt drawn to the cult of violence Terrorist groups became active particularly in Bengal and the Punjab It was at this stage that Lord Birkenhead, then Secretary of State for India, announced the appointment of a Statutory Commission to enquire into the working of the Government of India Act of 1919 The Com-

mission was headed by Sir John (later Viscount) Simon, and contained six representatives of the three British political parties. The appointment of the all-White Simon Commission brought about a great change in the political scene and all parties, including the Moderates and the bulk of the Muslims, decided on boycotting the Commission. The boycott was a resounding success and the Central Legislative Assembly refused to co-operate with the Simon Commission.

The Congress now took the initiative in convening an All Parties Conference and appointing a Committee with Pandit Motilal Nehru as Chairman to draft an agreed constitution for India. The Constitution was duly prepared and it was presented to the plenary session of the Congress which met at Calcutta in December 1928 under the presidentship of Pandit Motilal Nehru. Though at first the Jinnah section of the Muslim League had welcomed the Nehru report, they later withdrew their support to the clauses relating to communal representation. Jinnah now put forward a list of fourteen points, which, he declared, must be conceded by the Congress if the Muslims were to accept the Nehru Report.

The Nehru Report had envisaged Dominion Status for India and the Calcutta Congress of 1928 passed a resolution whereby the Congress would accept Dominion Status if it was offered within twelve months and that otherwise, the Congress would at the end of the year plump for complete independence and start a nationwide non-violent struggle to achieve it.

The events in the country could not leave Munshi untouched. Though after Bardoli he had resumed his normal life it was never the same. He continued to rely on the West for his dress and occasionally for his food. He still moved in the same social circles, sipping tea with

companions whom he later described with little charity as 'ladies with powdered faces and no brains' But he continued to tell them what he called 'stupid stories.' Munshi is a very good recanteur and the ladies were no doubt amused!

There was, however, a great conflict in his soul and he undoubtedly felt a sense of intense frustration He tried to overcome both by concentrating more vigorously on his profession and by increased literary activities He participated in the boycott of the Simon Commission and was a member of the Bombay Boycott Committee which had Sir Chimanlal Setalvad as President and Mrs Sarojini Naidu as Secretary That Committee included Jinnah, Sir Purushottamdas Thakurdas M R Jayaker Shaukat Ali and others

In summer of 1929 Munshi went to Simla for a holiday He wanted to collect some data for a book which he then intended to write on contemporary political problems At Simla he found that the country was being ruled by British bureaucrats who had 'assessed the price of every Indian politician in the Central Legislative Assembly and had reduced the creation of dissensions into fine art'

II

Increased professional and cultural activities could not however assuage the conflict in Munshi's soul Moreover events in India were rapidly developing to a climax The youth movement was gathering momentum, labour was becoming increasingly conscious of its rights the peasantry too did not lag behind, and among the students there was a great awakening Youth leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose exerted

considerable influence on the younger generation, and there was noticeable a general desire for a straight fight with the British bureaucracy

The Congress was to meet at Lahore in the last week of 1929, and in the Presidential election Gandhiji secured the largest number of votes Gandhiji, however, refused to wear what he called 'the crown of thorns' and placed it firmly on the youthful head of Jawaharlal Nehru The Congress at Lahore declared itself in favour of Poorna Swaraj (Complete Independence) and authorised the starting of a mass civil disobedience campaign In February 1930 the All-India Congress Committee authorised Gandhiji to start the campaign and invested him with full powers Gandhiji decided to break the Salt Law and announced his intention to do so in a letter to the Viceroy, which was carried to the latter by a young quaker, Reginald Reynolds, who was staying at the Sabarmati Ashram at that time Eleven days later, on the 13th March Gandhiji set out on his historic march to Dandi

Gandhiji reached Dandi and broke the Salt Law on the 6th April which is associated in the Indian mind with the massacre of Jallianwalla Bagh which took place on the 6th April 1919 The Government came down with a heavy hand and ordinances were issued giving wide powers to the police and the executive But these laws, however draconian in their import, could not curb popular enthusiasm On the other hand from Kailas to Kanya Kumari, from Karachi to Kamrup, the Civil Disobedience campaign was in full swing

This mass upsurge could not leave Munshi untouched Munshi himself in a very moving passage has described the agony he felt at not being with the popular current

'Every day of his (Gandhiji's) march brought me tense excitement and insufferable agony I felt like a

thrice-cursed slave tied to a millstone of luxurious living, destined to grind and to grind for ever. Why was I not in my country's service? Why was I not ready to stand for the ideals which I had always cherished? Why had I not the courage of even a Gujarati villager? When Gujarat was rising like one man, why was I, who always talked of its greatness, staying away from the fight? When the nation had declared a war, why was I thinking of sneaking away to Kashmir?'

Munshi was apparently judging himself too harshly for being 'tied to a millstone of luxurious living' He had started his career as a poor lawyer with the natural ambition to emulate the giants of the bar He had succeeded in reaching his goal Few men having toiled hard for a prize can throw it away without a great conflict of mind or soul He had drifted into Bardoli, and had come out with a great reputation of which he did not make any 'political capital' It did not occur to him to join the Congress at that time While the *satyagraha* at Bardoli was a positive action which appealed to his imagination, the Congress programme from 1928 to 1930 appeared visionary He was not satisfied with what he was doing, but the Congress activities during those two years hardly provided him with any opportunity to do anything at all.

It was at this stage that he had a long discussion with Mahadev Desai of whom Gandhiji once wrote that he 'out-Boswells Boswell himself' The talks must have cleared whatever doubts there might have been in Munshi's mind and he decided to take the plunge He resolved to resign his membership of the Bombay Legislative Council and to participate in the Civil Disobedience campaign

In a stirring letter to Gandhiji dated the 14th April, Munshi made known his decision The letter is a glowing

testament of the evolution of Munshi from a Constitutionalist to a Crusader —

> For some days past I have carefully watched the heroic struggle which Gujarat has commenced under your guidance and I feel that I cannot let career or comforts stand between me and the step which I am now taking
>
> I believed and still believe that Dominion Status is not far removed from Independence, but, after anxious thought, I am convinced that the Government is determined not to transfer any substantial power to Indians, that the present constitution is a mask to conceal the irresponsible despotism of a well-organised official group, that no political progress or economic salvation is possible unless by the magnitude of our sacrifice we compel, to borrow your inimitable phrase, "a complete change of heart" in those who have constituted themselves the relentless enemies of our aspirations
>
> In 1920, I left the Congress because at Nagpur you changed its creed, today, in 1930, I rejoin it because I have come to believe that outside that creed there is no honest political life For long I disapproved of your methods, today, except through them, I cannot visualise a free India
>
> I have joined the Congress and submitted the resignation of my membership of the Bombay Legislative Council It was with a deep mortification that I assisted at the farce enacted in the Bombay Council, where under the garb of democracy, the most irresponsible despotism was legalised
>
> I am now offering my services, feeble as they are, to you Perhaps delicate health may make it difficult for me to bear the strenuous life of hardship and

comparative poverty which I will have to face, but when the whole of Gujarat and with it India has started on a glorious march in martyrdom, I, who dreamt of greatness through my literary efforts, cannot stand by and look on

Personal affairs and a part-heard case will keep me occupied till the 17th, on the 18th I will go to see my old mother at Panchgani, on the 21st I will place myself at your command

I met Mahadevbhai yesterday, and he said you could be seen at Dandi on Wednesday If you let me know by wire, I will come there as I expect that the Judge before whom I am appearing will not sit in Court on Wednesday

On the very same day Munshi also wrote to the Governor of Bombay resigning his membership of the Legislative Council:

For a considerable time I have watched with bitter anguish of spirit how the Legislatures as constituted under the Government of India Act are being used as agencies for legalising the despotism of the official group and for dividing the politicians of the land If I continued as a member of the Bombay Council so far, it was only because it was difficult to give up a position from which I could look after the interests of the University I love so much

It is no longer possible to hug the fond delusion to the heart that in the matter of granting Dominion Status the British Government means well by our people It has started a ruthless war against Indian aspirations in the name of law and order, and those who witnessed or read of the unprovoked violence of the police the other day near the Girgaum Magistrate Court can have no doubt that in the prosecution of

this war the authorities have set themselves no limits imposed either by civilisation or by canons of fair-play

Under the circumstances there is only one path to which duty points and that is to join the Congress which alone stands today for the dignity and freedom of our unfortunate nation As the Congress mandate requires that I should resign my seat in the Council I am forwarding a formal resignation to Secretary of the Council

III

Within a day of his resignation we find Munshi throwing himself wholeheartedly into Gandhiji's campaign and addressing the citizens of Bombay on 'How to outvie Gujarat'

> We must prove now that Bombay is the first city in India in this great struggle, as it is on the shield of the Municipal Corporation of Bombay But before we can achieve that proud distinction, there is one thing which I feel I must in all humility communicate to all my co-workers and well-wishers of the cause I have perceived that in the City of Bombay the greatest enemy of our movement is not the Government but the agent provocateur He mixes with the workers and the volunteers and he is anxious to create disturbance
>
> The prime need, therefore, is to be strictly non-violent The volunteers are performing their duty with heroic discipline All satyagrahis and sympathisers desire nothing more than complete non-violence But that is not enough We must fully

realise that in complete non-violence alone lies our victory Any disturbance will strengthen the hands of Government and drive Mahatmaji to the dire necessity of starving himself to death as he has threatened He has given the word and the soldiers under his banner have to die rather than commit or permit violence We are out to eradicate war by non-violence and we are determined to succeed.

I would, therefore, very humbly make the following suggestions to the citizens of Bombay participating in this national struggle —

1 If a man abuses you, do not retort

2 If a man threatens to beat you, hold your hand and bear the punishment

3 If the Police strike you, do not run away Remember that you are out to die for your country. Immediately sit down with hands folded

4 If the Police rush on you, let all volunteers and satyagrahis lie down

I heard of the attack on peaceful citizens near the Girgaum Police Magistrate Court Such attacks are intended to test our strength, our heroism and our capacity for being martyrs When an attack comes, sit down or lie down with folded hands Let the representatives of force and exploitation walk over your bodies We wish them joy

This is an extreme measure which I am suggesting But Bombay is not Gujarat Bombay has a certain element of unreliable people We have to conquer it by the strength of our soul

We are out to offer ourselves at the altar of our country's freedom and nothing can be more glorious than being trodden to death under the hoof of arro-

gant authority in order to vindicate our beloved Mahatmaji's gospel of complete non-violence

This speech like many others to follow was delivered in Chowpatty, to which every day men and women converged in processions carrying national flags, singing national songs and there defied the Salt Law The movement was at its height, yet it retained its peaceful character At one of the meetings at Chowpatty, Munshi received enthusiastic cheers from the hundred-thousand strong gathering when he exhorted the women specially to organise and prepare salt from sea water in every chawl in the city, and even to refuse to cook with Government salt

Munshi, accompanied by Mrs Lilavati Munshi, met Gandhiji at Vejalpur near Navsari on April 21 Gandhiji greeted them with his famous smile and quipped "Both of you have come back from your *vanavasa* (exile, literally life in the forest)" Gandhiji was referring to Munshi's being away from the Congress since 1920

The Government did not wait long Within a week after he saw Gandhiji, Munshi was arrested for preparing salt unlawfully at Bhatia Baug, opposite the Victoria Terminus, though as a matter of fact, he had done nothing more than leading a procession of people who had brought salt-water from the sea and looking on, as a lady was lighting a stove

He was produced the same day before the Chief Presidency Magistrate, H P (later Sir Hormusji) Dastur at the crowded Esplanade Police Court Amidst cheers from enthusiastic crowds Munshi entered the Court from the lock-up Asked by the Magistrate to cross-examine prosecution witnesses, Munshi replied 'As I do not recognise this tribunal appointed by a foreign government I will not be able to take any part in these proceedings' He was then asked whether he would make any

plea He replied 'In doing what I have done, I have only discharged the duties of the high profession to which both of us have the honour to belong I am here to invite you to inflict upon me any penalty which you, in the discharge of your duty as a servant of a foreign employer, choose' He, however, refused to sign that statement He was sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment and a fine of Rs 300 in default of which he was to undergo two months' further imprisonment

The life in the Arthur Road Jail, Munshi says, came as a refreshing change from restless professional activities Regular exercise, prayers and study added a happy rhythm to a life which had no hurry and no worry' After two months he was transferred to the Yervada jail where from his yard he could hear the sound of Gandhiji's sandals as he walked and the bleatings of his goat The prisoners were a happy lot in spite of the indifference of the jailer and the deliberate attempts of the minor prison officials to make jail life miserable

In August 1930, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and M R Jayakar came to interview Gandhiji about the offer made by the Viceroy to the Congress to attend the first Round Table Conference Sir Tej Bahadur and Jayakar met Munshi as well and discussed with him their offer But Munshi felt that both of them lacked that sympathetic understanding which negotiators should have in order to be successful A few days later, Munshi was transferred to the Nasik jail to make room for Pandit Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru who were brought to Yervada to confer with Gandhiji

To a prisoner even a change of jail could be refreshing Moreover, the Nasik jail was neat and spacious the officials were considerate and the climate Munshi found,

was superb He met many fresh arrivals and learnt from them the latest news of the outside world

Munshi was released from the Nasik jail on October 2, 1930 The first surprise that greeted him on his arrival at the Victoria Terminus was the vast crowd that had gathered to welcome him He came to realise the great change that had overtaken the city, where it was said that every man was a Congressman and every house a Congress House

His work, soon, brought him recognition, and he was appointed a substitute member of the Congress Working Committee He went to Jubbulpore, 'to fan the dying embers of *satyagraha* into flame' His main work was, however, confined to the city of Bombay, where he worked hard and successfully to maintain a militant programme

On January 25, 1931, Gandhiji and the members of the Congress Working Committee were released On March 4, the Gandhi-Irwin truce was signed

Shortly after, Munshi rejoined the bar He, however, continued to maintain his connection with the Congress and attended the Karachi session, but his political activities during the period of the Gandhi-Irwin truce were negligible Munshi, however, had no difficulty in regaining his successful position at the bar

IV

A small incident at this time brought Munshi very close to Gandhiji Let Munshi recapitulate it in his characteristic way

> After Gandhiji came out of jail in 1931, I expected that he would accept my services in the spirit

in which I had offered them. But the jealousies which had been roused during the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 had driven various kind friends to circulate the rumour that, while the struggle had been in progress, both my wife and I had worked in the British interest Those were days of great tension and a whisper of that kind was a terrible weapon in the hands of one's enemies Nobody had paused for a moment to consider what motive I could possibly have in changing my independent position at the Bar and in public life for that of an agent of a foreign power Wherever I went I found that the whisper had been spread in advance. This was my first experience of the law of the jungle which prevails in many of the departments of public life I was miserable beyond words

Within a very few hours of his release from jail even Gandhiji himself was told of it I felt a change in his attitude and sought an early chance of discussing the matter with him

Never shall I forget the walk on the Hornby Vellard at five o'clock one winter morning. I told him about the campaign that was being carried on against me and he replied that he too had heard the rumour but had not believed it My mortification knew no bounds I had come to Gandhiji because of an irresistible inner urge I had expected no reward and now, through no fault of my own, I was branded as a traitor

I remember that while speaking to him my voice was choked with emotion I am pretty sure that tears of indignation came into my eye I told Gandhiji that I should not like to continue in the Con-

gress under the shadow of such a calumny and that I wished to go back to my old life, away from politics

Gandhiji had the gift of sympathetic understanding With inimitable sweetness he consoled me Such calumnies were not uncommon in politics, he said We all had to suffer and to survive them In this case, however, he would see that it was counteracted

On that solitary road, with the sea thundering at our feet and the stars watching over our heads, I realized for the first time how truly great he was

When we parted that morning, he was no longer just my political chief, he had entered my life as a human being

In August 1931, Gandhiji left for London to attend the Second Round Table Conference His last advice to Lilavati Munshi, before his departure, was that they should not 'settle down' before his return

The Second Round Table Conference failed to achieve its purpose On December 28, 1931 Gandhiji returned to India, but a few days before his arrival Jawaharlal Nehru and the Khan Brothers had been arrested The new Viceroy, Lord Willingdon, refused to grant an interview to Gandhiji to discuss these arrests The olive branch having been rejected, Gandhiji had no alternative but to inform the Viceroy on January 3, that 'every endeavour will be made on the part of the Congress to carry on the campaign '

That evening, Munshi's mother in spite of her age and indifferent health attended Gandhiji's prayer meeting When Gandhiji was leaving the grounds, he asked her whether she was prepared for her son being sent to jail again "I have entrusted my son to you" was her reply

She came home and cheerfully assured Munshi: "I won't die till you return"

In the early morning of January 4, Gandhiji was arrested Next day at 5-30 A M came Munshi's turn along with hundreds of other leaders The second Civil Disobedience campaign had started

Munshi was kept for a short period in a Bombay prison He and a few others were considered too dangerous to be tried in Bombay So during the darkness of a night they were smuggled from Bombay to the Bijapur jail, which, in the days of the Adilshahi kings, was a caravanserai

Later, the political prisoners were let out for a day on parole and on condition of their reporting to the police at a certain time They failed to observe the terms, as the authorities knew they would and for a very good reason The police officer to whom they should have reported at the office was at the scheduled time waiting to place them under arrest for non-observance of parole This was meticulously followed in the case of Munshi A trial followed and the embarrassed Magistrate sentenced Munshi to two years' rigorous imprisonment, protesting his helplessness all the time

In Bijapur jail there were about two hundred political prisoners and nearly a hundred ordinary criminals But some of the politicals' were difficult and Munshi had to play the part of a mediator between them and the Superintendent of the Jail

In the dull monotony of jail life, Munshi had ample time on his hands. He utilised this by writing 'Gujarat and Its Literature' the plays and novels relating to the Vedic period, and the biography of Narsinha Mehta For the rest, he attended Hindi classes and joined the prayers

For no apparent reason the Bombay Government suddenly reduced Munshi's status in prison from 'A' to 'B' class The result was that Munshi, who lives mainly on milk and fruits, was left with the alternative of eating rice and wheat bread or of starving Soon he lost weight and developed neuritis and for some months lost the use of his right hand This handicap, however, forced him to learn to write with his left hand

By the end of 1932 and in the beginning of 1933 he was let out of jail twice on parole on account of the serious illness, once of his mother and secondly of his son During these occasions the condition of his health was brought to the notice of the Home Member who permitted him, on his return to jail, to have the necessary food at his expense.

On December 8, 1933, on the eve of his release he noted in his diary

'Tell him (Gandhiji) I am not offering C D again; I want to go back to the Bar Reasons

(a) health will not permit,

(b) the welfare of the family makes it necessary

Consult him as to—

(a) whether C D should be withdrawn,

(b) whether before the new Act is passed he expects things to look up,

(c) whether an all-parties stand would be advisable,

(d) what activity I should adopt to be helpful to him,

(e) whether a propaganda centre would be of any use to him, and if so where,

(f) whether I should express my views on the proposed Act, Communism and Class war'

V

Munshi was released from the Bijapur jail on 9th December 1933.

A stalemate in the political situation confronted Munshi on his release The Civil Disobedience Movement had fizzled out owing to the relentless repression of Lord Willingdon who was determined to crush the Congress. There was no alternative programme before the country Following the conclusion of the Third Round Table Conference, His Majesty's Government had published a White Paper containing proposals for constitutional reforms. There was also the rumour that Lord Willingdon wanted to hold a snap election to the Central Legislative Assembly and show to the outside world that the Congress was dead Munshi felt that a positive programme was imperatively necessary

Within four days of his release, Munshi accompanied by Lilavati Munshi went to Madras and saw Gandhiji who was now immersed in Harijan work Gandhiji asked him not to join the bar again, but to devote himself entirely to politics But for the reasons noted in his diary he refused, adding "We are birds of the spring We will sing while it lasts, and then will disappear to be heard no more " Such a remark might have been considered flippant, had it not been sincere That he still retained the confidence and affection of Gandhiji was due to his sincerity and frankness, as well as his other qualities of head and heart which his leaders found extremely useful But, by refusing Gandhiji, he denied himself the chance of securing his position in the party

At Madras, Munshi stayed with the late A Rangaswami Iyengar, who had been one of the right-hand men of Pandit Motilal Nehru in the Swaraj Party and who

was then the Editor of the 'Hindu' Iyengar and Munshi discussed 'the question of restarting the Swaraj party in order to rescue the country from the slough of despond' Munshi's faith in parliamentary activities had remained unshaken, and he offered co-operation if Gandhiji approved So Munshi and Iyengar prepared a draft scheme, placed it before Gandhiji and obtained his approval Thereafter, they contacted Dr M A Ansari, Dr B C Roy and several other leaders

At this time, Council entry was considered to be a heresy, and few had the courage to suggest it Few at that time knew that Gandhiji had blessed the proposal, and fewer still today know the part played in the initial stages by Munshi and Iyengar People were not, however, wanting at the time in Bombay, who would point scornfully at Munshi as 'the man who wanted to enter the Council'

However, after some correspondence had passed, about thirty leaders from all over India met at Dr. Ansari's house at Delhi on March 31, 1934 and the following day Unfortunately Iyengar was no longer alive, but Munshi placed before the meeting the draft which Gandhiji had seen The discussions showed that an increasing number of Congressmen were coming to the view that, in the situation existing in the country as a result of Ordinance rule, it was essential to enter the legislatures and to oppose the government from within

After two days debate, it was resolved that the All-India Swaraj party should be revived in order to enable Congressmen who were not offering individual Civil Disobedience to undertake through an organisation the constructive programme as contemplated by Gandhiji By another resolution it was decided to contest the forthcoming election to the Central Legislative Assembly It

was laid down that the election should be fought on the twin issues of getting all the repressive laws repealed and of rejecting the proposals for constitutional reform contained in the White Paper issued by the British Government and getting them replaced by the National Demand as formulated by Gandhiji at the Second Round Table Conference

The conference then sent a deputation consisting of Dr Ansari, Bhulabhai Desai and Dr B C Roy to wait on Gandhiji and ascertain his opinion It was also resolved to hold a more representative conference at Ranchi in the first week of May

VI

Gandhiji at this time was touring the earthquake devastated areas of Bihar, and on April 2 he had prepared a statement withdrawing Civil Disobedience and restricting it to himself Before, however, he had time to issue the statement, news came that the Ansari-Desai delegation was coming to see him so he witheld its publication till after he had a personal discussion with the delegation The publication of Gandhiji's statement on April 7, 1934 was preceded by a letter to Dr Ansari dated two days earlier in which Gandhiji stated But I feel that it is not only the right but it is the duty of every Congressman, who, for some reason or other does not want to or cannot take part in Civil resistance and who has faith in entry into the Legislatures, to seek entry and form combinations in order to prosecute the programme which he or they believe to be in the interest of the country " He however, made it clear that personally he did not favour entry into Legislatures but subject to this he added I shall be

at the disposal of the party at all times and render such assistance as it is in my power to give'

On April 6, Munshi issued the following statement making his position clear

> I am filled with inexpressible joy to learn that Mahatmaji has approved of the step which we took at Delhi Those of us who met at Delhi except for a negligible voice or two felt confident that he in his deep wisdom will welcome the honest attempt we were making to arrest the growing disintegration of our political life
>
> The power and strength of the Congress exists today in the country, notwithstanding the absence of any positive manifestations, and the All India Swaraj Party will furnish the channel through which they will find their true expression under existing conditions
>
> There is no comparison between the formation of the Swaraj Party in 1924 and its revival now Then it was in opposition to Mahatmaji, now, it lives and will flourish under his guidance The Party then entered the Legislatures to obstruct the Montford Constitution It will now go to the polling booths to render it impossible for the British Government to foist on Indians any constitution which will keep them second-class citizens of a White Empire
>
> I daresay that on such an important subject there will be difference of opinion among Congressmen themselves, but our sense of discipline must triumph once again and the nation must respond to the new policy of which Mahatmaji has so unequivocally approved

Munshi's advocacy of Council entry was only a projection of his faith in the leadership of Gandhiji. This he made clear in a letter he wrote on April 9, to Pandit Santhanam 'Between you and me it is absolutely necessary that some of us must be actively associated with the Swaraj Party Though attempts in the nature of things are bound to be made to rush in all sorts of programme, it will be our duty to stand by Gandhism So far as Indian conditions are concerned, I cannot imagine salvation coming to us through any other source'

But the way to Council entry was clouded with bitter controversy Purshottamdas Tricumdas described the programme as an unholy pact between Gandhiji and the Swarajists K F Nariman publicly referred to 'Mr Munshi's loose conclusions, and sought to limit the significance of Gandhiji's approval The Bombay newspaper the *Sun* considering Munshi's advocacy in favour of the change as 'futile and unwarranted,' asked its readers to choose 'between Mr Nariman and Mr Munshi' It is difficult to explain Nariman's stand at this time, because in May he declared before Gandhiji that he wanted Civil Disobedience to be given up as the official programme of the Congress (Tendulkar *Mahatma, II*, 334)

However, K F Nariman attended the conference held at Ranchi on May 2 and the following day to take necessary steps to render the Swaraj party a living organization and to prepare the ground for obtaining the approval of the A I C C which was due to meet in Patna on 18th and 19th May Among those present at the Ranchi conference were, Dr Rajendra Prasad, C Rajagopalachari, Dr. Ansari, Mrs Sarojini Naidu, Bhulabhai Desai, Jamnalal Bajaj, Munshi, Deepnarayan Singh and K F Nariman These leaders also met Gandhiji at Ranchi and had a com-

plete exchange of views with him The conference adopted a revised constitution of the Swaraj Party, according to which, though the party retained complete control over internal administration and party finance, the party was to be guided by the Congress on matters of broad policy

Some idea of the part that Munshi played in the Ranchi Conference may be gleaned from the following Associated Press message on the eve of the Conference

'They had a hurried talk with Mr Gandhi after which Dr Ansari and Mr Asaf Ali left for Minister Aziz's house and held a discussion with Mr Munshi on the draft scheme regarding the constitution and programme of the Swaraj Party and likely office-bearers This scheme will be informally submitted to Mr Gandhi to-morrow Mr Gandhi, though observing silence, granted interviews to Mr Bhulabhai Desai, Mr Munshi and Mrs Naidu, who expressed their respective points of view and conveyed the opinions of Bombay Congressmen '

The A I C C meeting endorsed the resolutions of the Ranchi Conference But instead of reviving the Swaraj Party it set up an official Congress Parliamentary Board with not more than twenty-five members, and with Dr Ansari as its President The Board was to run and control elections of members to the legislatures on behalf of the Congress and was to have power to raise, possess and administer funds for carrying its duties Subject to the approval of the A I C C the board was also given the power to frame its constitution The Board was directed to select only such candidates as will be pledged to carry out in the legislatures the Congress policy, as will be determined from time to time '

Munshi served as one of the secretaries of this Board Of the four zones in which the country was divided,—Madras, Bombay, Bengal, Delhi —he was allotted the spe-

cific charge of the Bombay area which consisted of the provinces of Bombay and Central Provinces

It was a hectic period for Munshi He wrote articles, delivered speeches and organised Committees It is interesting to recall now that at this time he wrote an article on the Constituent Assembly explaining its historical meaning and significance with examples drawn from all countries The article was intended to show how the Constituent Assembly had come to play an important part in modern political life After giving the history of Constituent Assemblies in Europe, America and the British Commonwealth, he concluded

'The Congress stands for such an Assembly For, it alone can be the symbol of India's freedom and the source of her people's strength Through it India hopes to attain the dignity of an enfranchised nation, fashion its will to self-determination and find its own soul to express it through fundamental laws

VII

In October 1934 the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee set up a Parliamentary Board for Bombay City with K F Nariman as the Chairman and Munshi and S A Brelvi as members Two non-Muhammadan seats were allotted to Bombay City for the Central Legislative Assembly, but Nariman decided that only one Congress candidate need be put up and that candidate was Nariman himself His reason for not contesting both the seats was that the Congress had no chance of winning more than one seat

Some time later Sardar Patel then President of the Congress was released from jail He scrutinised the elec-

toral rolls and was satisfied that Congress had a fair chance of winning both the seats So he insisted on the Congress contesting the other seat instead of conceding it to the liberal Parsi candidate, Sir Cowasjee Jehangir, as Nariman had undoubtedly done by setting up only one candidate

Sardar first asked Munshi to contest the second seat, but he declined on account of personal reasons Dr G. V Deshmukh was then selected as the second Congress candidate, the two selections—Nariman and Deshmukh—were ratified by the Central Parliamentary Board, and the two Congress candidates were asked to file their nomination papers

October 11 was the last day for filing nomination papers in Bombay, and on the 10th, Sardar Patel was due to leave for Wardha A few hours before Sardar's departure, Nariman went and told him that he, that is Nariman, was not eligible to stand as the name in the electoral roll was not his but that of his brother, who had the same initials

An explanation seems to be necessary as to how Nariman could be sure that the initials 'K F' in the Assembly electoral list was not his The address of K F Nariman given in the electoral roll was 45, Esplanade Road, where Nariman's brother had his office, while Nariman was residing at 'Readymoney Terraces' As Nariman had no connection whatsoever with 45 Esplanade Road, he was sure that the name which appeared in the roll was that of his brother

It seems however that it took Nariman a few vital days to realise the implication of the confusion created by wrong address and common initials In his nomination paper he had declared 'Readymoney Terraces' as his residence and given them to one Chhotalal to be filed be-

fore the Collector along with Deshmukh's nomination paper. Chhotalal detected the discrepancy in the addresses, and brought back Nariman's nomination paper while he filed that of Deshmukh Nariman thereupon assured him that everything was in perfect order, and Chhotalal filed his nomination paper Had Nariman rushed with this information to Sardar, things would have been much easier. As it is, he seems to have cogitated over it for several days till the simple explanation dawned on his mind. As it was, Sardar became more taciturn than usual, after Nariman informed him that under the circumstances he must withdraw from the contest

Nariman's sensitive conscience then received another shock He discovered that the disqualification of D P Mishra a Congress candidate from Jubbulpore had not been removed by the Government Indignantly he wrote to Sardar that all Congress candidates should withdraw as a protest against the discriminatory treatment meted out to Mishra and that in any case he was going to withdraw He also issued a press statement to that effect Sardar, exasperated by the display of such tender susceptibilities when grave issues were at stake, bluntly warned Nariman that such indiscipline would not be tolerated

Nariman's realisation of the truth, or at least his revelation of the same, was almost too late Under the electoral rules, those who had served a term in prison were not eligible to contest a seat Almost all the prominent Congressmen came under this ban, the Government, of course, was withdrawing the ban, but only when the person concerned applied for the same Only the actual candidates were filing such applications, the rest like Munshi, for obvious reasons, had not taken the trouble to do so Now only one more day was left for submitting fresh nomination papers

The time was short and Sardar took an immediate

decision He called Munshi to the railway station just as he was leaving for Wardha Munshi rushed from the Court to the station platform and was not a little startled to learn that he should file his nomination papers the next day He had declined the same offer, but faced with the peremptory request of Sardar, found himself compelled to agree It was, however, decided that if Nariman's nomination was accepted, Munshi would withdraw his, otherwise Munshi would be the second Congress candidate

The night after Sardar had left, Mathurdas Tricumji, Munshi and Bhulabhai Desai found out that the objections to Nariman's candidature could be got over under Rule 6(1)(a) of the Electoral Rules, V J. Patel had taken advantage of this rule under similar circumstances Nariman was informed that his nomination paper was valid and that he need not be afraid of its being rejected

Munshi had his disqualification removed after a personal interview with Mr Maxwell, then Home Member of Bombay Nariman on the same day withdrew his nomination paper

Nariman then made a last attempt to salve his conscience Monday, the 15th October, was the day for scrutiny of nomination papers On that day, Nariman submitted to the Collector a fresh nomination paper The Collector naturally rejected it, as the last date for filing nomination papers had expired at 3 P M on the previous Thursday

It is strange that Nariman should have been ignorant of the basic rule of electoral procedure Probably, the legal formalities of democratic procedure were too complicated for him, for I have heard that as a lawyer, his equipment and experience were limited

Munshi and Deshmukh therefore remained as the two Congress candidates With Congress prestige what it was

in Bombay in 1934, their chances even in that limited constituency were quite hopeful, though Sir Cowasji Jehangir was a formidable candidate But Munshi was defeated by about one thousand votes The result was as follows:—

Dr G V. Deshmukh	...	19,872 votes
Sir Cowasji Jehangir	..	18,140 „
K M. Munshi	..	17,015 „

Several Congress workers, press reporters and other impartial witnesses alleged that Nariman was responsible for Munshi's defeat According to them Nariman (then President of the B P C C) went to the polling booths of F and G wards at about 2 P M and gave instructions to the workers that voters should be asked to cast both their votes for Deshmukh only, as Munshi had already received overwhelming support in all the other wards R G Tendulkar later found on inspection that about one thousand single votes had been cast in favour of Deshmukh Had these voters given their second votes to Munshi, he would have surely been elected

This defeat of a Congress candidate in Bombay remained in the topic of controversy for quite a long time. The *Bombay Sentinel* published a letter headed 'Shady Election Tactics,' condemning Nariman for his unwarranted withdrawal from the election and repeating the allegations about the voting instructions at Dadar.

Nariman issued a statement in the *Free Press Journal* describing these reports as 'absolutely false ' He admitted his visit to F and G wards at Dadar, but stated that the suggestion to vote only for Deshmukh was made by some workers He admitted, however, that he would have accepted the advice to deviate from the original instruction to divide votes equally if the polling situation had warranted any such change

Unfortunately Nariman's version was immediately

contradicted by a Barrister, M A Merchant Merchant stated that he was in the F and G polling stations throughout the day and that he found Nariman's statement 'misleading' He confirmed the damaging versions given by other including Munshi's election agent 'Nariman will be best advised to keep silent over his conduct as regards the different stages of the Assembly elections,' Merchant stated in his letter which appeared in the *Bombay Sentinel* on 28th November

Nariman probably would have been content to follow Merchant's advice, but others were not Tongues were let loose, and insinuations were made against him However, it is not necessary to go into the unhappy episode in greater detail For Munshi, it was the only defeat at elections suffered in a lifetime spent in politics For Nariman, it was the beginning of the end of a promising political career.

VIII

The immediate result of this defeat on Munshi was depressing He had gradually to sever his connection with the Parliamentary Board, which he had partly created and developed This was a great blow His political career, however, suffered very little, if at all He received wide sympathy, and the gratitude of the Congress High Command, particularly of Sardar for his gallant fight to win the election Looking back, the only thing that can be said now is that had he won the election, probably he would have distinguished himself in the Central Legislature as a worthy companion of Bhulabhai and Satyamurthi and gained an all-India reputation even then as a Parliamentarian

The defeat in the election served Munshi and the country ultimately The Government of India Act of 1935 had been passed and it was known that the provincial part of the Act would be put into operation The new Act gave wide powers to the elected provincial legislatures and Munshi was firmly of the opinion that these powers should be utilised in the struggle for freedom while the general attitude of Congressmen was in favour of total rejection of the new Act Munshi boldly came forward with the plea that the Congress should accept office in the provinces In an article written at the time, he advocated.

> Barring the miracles which world war and world revolution are supposed to accomplish, India cannot secure Independence without being an organised nation with an irresistible collective will Therefore, when we say that the goal of the Congress to-day is *Purna Swaraj*, we only mean that the goal is to generate national power which will secure such Swaraj in the future The object of the Congress is to gain the strength with which to win *Purna Swaraj*
>
> The history of the Congress during the last thirty years shows how this strength has grown out of the rhythmic movements of our national life A lull has followed the storm and in its turn has been followed by a still more powerful storm Every succeeding upheaval has been characterised by an increasingly wider basis and sterner resistance This was achieved by the Congress, not by shouting impossible slogans or making impatient gestures, but by acquiring a wider control over the life of the people during every period of lull Congressmen under the direction of leading members of the Congress hierarchy organised themselves into voluntary associations for furthering nation-building in its different

aspects Many forms of social organisation in the country like associations, clubs, local boards, educational and civic bodies, and the legislatures were brought under leaders animated by the Congress policy If khadi had not created an army for selfless workers, if the workers had not spread a spirit of quiet discipline; if their ashrams had not taught organised resistance to evil, if the mercantile associations had not been led to prefer politics to profits, if municipalities had not given Congressmen a hold over civic life in many cities, the nation could not have offered the resistance which it did during three years of Ordinance Rule The strength thus put forward, no doubt, was inadequate, for the process was spontaneous rather than deliberately planned At each place, the discipline varied with the quality of the leader, the Working Committee laid down a specific programme of action and numerous Congress Committees carried it out according to the measure of their ability

The real objective of the Congress, therefore, is to prepare the country for a new life, a life in which mass movements, characterised by strenuous resistance to all things anti-national, alternate with intensive activity for gaining greater control over all forms of social organisations, governmental and non-governmental During the present lull, therefore, the Congress has to seek every opportunity to bring all publicly organized activities under the control of well-drilled Congressmen, under the direction of a single will Gandhiji, with intuition more than policy, appears to have taken a step forward in the right direction He has evidently decided that all national activities including the legislative activity, should

> be controlled directly according to a premeditated plan and programme. Only by introducing disciplined action in this way into the different spheres of national life can the spirit of resistance be kept up and the goal of the Congress achieved.
>
> The Working Committee has therefore, to take steps to exercise direct control over as many organisations or activities in the country as possible. It is, then, difficult to undertand how by accepting Office and assuming control of the Legislature, the most powerful governmental association in the province, the Congress would be deflected from its course or fall from grace Even if there is some chance of utilizing the power and influence of the Constitution in the interests of the Congress, or of offering resistance to the special powers of the Governor, why should it be thrown away? The British Government has created the constitutional safeguards as a check against the power of the Congress, why give up an attempt to break through them and thus play into the hands of the enemy? A Congress group will shoulder responsibility for such an attempt only under the orders of the Working Committee If the purpose for which it has gone into office is not likely to be secured, it will be recalled forthwith, if it assists in gathering strength for the Congress, the next upheaval will be so powerful that the nation will have advanced much nearer Swaraj And to call this co-operation, job-hunting or weakness is in itself defeatism, and bespeaks lack of self-confidence, which circumstances do not warrant

This quotation is from the last of a series of articles which Munshi wrote at the time advocating acceptance of office This required some courage Office

acceptance at that time was a live issue, and it was widely felt to be a sin The late S Satyamurti was the only other outspoken champion of office acceptance, for which of course he received his due share of odium Wiser heads kept their mouths firmly shut till Gandhiji decided in favour of accepting the office Thereafter, those wise gentlemen quietly walked into ministerial offices As a matter of fact, once Gandhiji removed the stigma by the sanctity of his approval, there was even some unseemly rivalry amongst Congressmen for these very offices, which some of them at any rate had scorned so bitterly a short while ago The Congress contested the elections to the provincial legislatures under the new Act and came out with a clear majority in six provinces including Bombay In Assam and the North West Frontier, it emerged as the single largest party Only in Bengal, Sind and the Punjab did the Congress meet with failure

IX

In Bombay the question of the leadership of the Provincial Legislature now became of first rate importance Nariman had so long been the unquestioned leader of the Bombay City Congress, but his inept handling of the 1934 elections had thoroughly undermined his position On the other hand, the party position of Munshi had improved to the extent that a section of the Bombay Press attacked him alleging that he 'was trying to replace Nariman as a leader ' He informed the press and Sardar that he did not aspire for the leadership In March 1937 news came that Shankerrao Deo and Gangadharrao Deshpande were contemplating to have B G Kher elected as the leader Sardar Patel at this time asked Munshi to induce Kher to

assume that responsibility Kher was reluctant at first but ultimately he agreed

So on 12th March, 1937, a meeting of the Congress legislators of the two houses was convened at which were present Sardar Patel, Achyut Patwardhan, Gangadharrao Deshpande, and Shankerrao Deo Sardar took the chair first, welcomed the legislators and then asked them to select their leader and other office-bearers Mangaldas Pakvasa was then duly elected as the Chairman of the meeting. Then followed two hours deliberation relieved by an interval of half an hour for refreshments

In the meeting, Munshi appealed for unanimity and suggested that Sardar and Gangadharrao should find out the person with the largest support in the house in order to make the election unanimous He also argued with some non-Brahmin members to convince them about the impartiality and integrity of Kher (who was a Maharashtrian Brahmin) It is possible that Munshi's exertions on behalf of Kher had some effect

To make the choice unanimous three Zonal spokesmen were then selected Sardar for Gujarat, Gangadharrao Deshpande for Karnatak and Shankerrao Deo for Maharashtra All of them declared themselves to be in favour of the election of Kher as the leader The proposal was then put from the Chair and carried with acclamation.

Munshi's inclusion in the Bombay cabinet was, however, a foregone conclusion The *Evening News of India* in its 'Bombay Man's Diary' speculated

'Quick silver is the word which leaps to mind in connection with Mr K M Munshi His mental processes are not merely acute but rapid as those who have heard him arguing a brief in the High Court realise Elfin, curiously bird-like in his movement, restless as a sparrow, yet wary as a hawk

Mr Munshi comes to his portfolio—it is a million dollars to a torn shirt that he takes over Education—with many and some remarkably sound ideas'

The next day the same paper had to admit the failure of the forecast and to announce Munshi's appointment as Home Minister. Coupled with it was an appreciation of the choice 'As a lawyer of keen wit and having considerable experience himself of Law and Order acquired in the good old days of disobedience, Mr Munshi is well-fitted to discharge his new responsibilities'

CHAPTER V

HOME MINISTER OF BOMBAY

I

The acceptance of office by the Congress in 1937 was a landmark in India's Swaraj struggle. The policy was assailed by the younger element in the Congress who characterised it as a surrender to British Imperialism. Wiseacres among British apologists were not wanting who predicted that professional agitators like Congressmen would make a mess of administration It was the good fortune of the Congress that it threw up administrators of the calibre of K M Munshi who confounded critics of both varieties He wrung admiration even from diehard Britishers for his ability as an administrator and he proved to the left wingers in the Congress that office acceptance was but another step in the freedom fight

On the 1st August 1937, i e , within a fortnight of the Congress assuming office in the Province, Munshi issued a *communique* on behalf of Government seeking to give the people an awareness of the enlargement of their freedom and inspiring in them a new confidence in the popular Government The *communique* assured the public that 'early steps are being taken by legislative measures to amend such laws as unduly fetter the legitimate and peaceful activities of the citizens ' It further gave assurances for the protection of civil liberties and fundamental rights of citizens, remedying of hardships due to the exercise of emergency powers in the past Lest the new liberty be mistaken as license, the *communique,* however, warned.

> While Government will do their best to maintain the civil liberties of the people, it must be realis-

ed that it is their primary duty to take all steps to prevent the dissemination of class hatred and ideas involving the use of organised or unorganised violence in the furtherance of any object

Building upon the assurance that Gandhiji had secured from Lord Linlithgow, Munshi lost no time to get certain conventions established in order to prevent gubernatorial incursion into the task of day-to-day administration

The Ministry decided to act as a single unit on all important matters, with the result that the Cabinet meeting became in effect a dialogue between the Governor and the Minister concerned backed by all the colleagues Daily closed-door Ministerial conferences were held and resulted in unanimity of views, which baffled all ranks of the bureaucracy

Whenever an occasion arose in the actual administration of affairs, Munshi did not fail to establish a constitutional point or to lay down a constitutional principle effectively reducing the ambit of the Governor's discretionary authority and necessarily enlarging the scope of the authority of the Ministry

To cite just two examples here, regarding correspondence with the Secretary of State and the Governor-General, Munshi objected to the suggestion that Ministers might send their representations to the Governor for being forwarded to the Government of India or the Secretary of State As the Governor was the constitutional head of the Provincial Government and all executive actions had to be performed in his name, he held it would be constitutionally incorrect, and also not in accordance with the practice followed in the Dominions

Similarly the Public Service Commission of Bombay had carried on in the early days of the Ministry a continuous warfare against all departments of Government for

what it considered the infringement of its statutory rights. Munshi pointed out the correct constitutional relationship between the Government and the Public Service Commission

'The Public Service Commission,' he contended 'was a device which provides a detached agency for non-party recruitment and protects a popular Ministry from constant charges of favouritism This did not imply that the Public Service Commission should be allowed to play the role of a monitor to the Government For the Government to concede such claim would be to abdicate its right of appointment When the Government asked for more than one name for a post, it clearly implied that it retained the right to choose from among the candidates selected by the Public Service Commission The Commission was not a quasi-independent organ like the judiciary Constitutionally it was a Committee appointed by the Government and vested with certain statutory powers for the attainment of a particular object '

In the history of India's struggle for freedom, the country passed through many vicissitudes and diverse phases of the fight itself, and office acceptance, of which Munshi was always one of the staunchest advocates, held no glamour for him except as another and a very effective vantage-ground whence to conduct the battle with greater vigour, better resources and much-needed experience in the art of public administration Thus the new conventions he worked for and achieved in the Governor-ministry relations were so many dents wrought into the walls of the enemy fortress, the capture of which was ever the aim and endeavour of Munshi His achievement in this sphere can now be seen both as a step, often overlooked, in the continual revolution against alien rule and as a vindication of his far-sighted, if often lonely, stand for the acceptance of

ministerial responsibility even in the limited provincial sphere

II

The maintenance of peace on the basis of friendly relations and mutually reciprocated goodwill between the Hindus and Muslims was a problem which at one time appeared as defying solution Munshi tackled the problem with his usual earnestness and firmness and his policy was announced in no mistakable terms in the course of a *communique*:

> The policy of the present Government with regard to Hindu-Muslim questions is to foster an attitude of mutual respect and reciprocity of adjustments between all communities in matters connected with religious observances, with due regard to their feelings and sentiments Harmonious relations between the two communities can only be achieved if leaders and newspapers of both communities cease to carry on a recriminatory campaign against each other

When a debate was raised in the Assembly on this *communique* by an adjournment motion on the 17th of August 1937, Munshi confirmed that determination unequivocally 'Government with all the resources at their command will endeavour ruthlessly to stamp out anything which tends to endanger the maintenance of harmonious relations between the two major communities '

That ruthless determination sometimes drew the severe criticism of opponents who would rather see an occasional riot or two than forego the doubtful 'rights' of the *goonda* and his supporters But it is now widely admitted that the seeming ruthlessness alone saved Bombay

city from blood-bath at least on two occasions, when as Home Minister Munshi crushed riots that broke out in 1938 and again in 1939 within the space of a few hours' time, and established his claim to be one of the ablest administrators of the day.

Munshi could cure *riotitis*—the disease of riots—mainly on the strength of a keen study of its cause and remedies 'Riotitis', said Munshi 'is a disease, which affects society and impels its sections to revert to jungle law Tendency to this disease is found in all societies, and the two processes by which it can be controlled are (1) the persistent propagation of the desirability of common fields of activity in place of the combative or mutually repulsive ones, and (2) the exertion by the Police force of a steady and coercive pressure upon the violent elements in society The first process is long and laborious and in order that it may succeed it is most necessary that periodic outbursts of *riotitis* are controlled by the action of the police in such a way that the violent-minded people get out of the habit of resorting to violent ways '

The first communal riots in Bombay during Munshi's tenure of office broke out on April 17, 1938 He had that day returned to Bombay from Hubli, somewhat indisposed At about 8-30 p m Munshi received a telephone message from the Deputy Commissioner of Police that communal riots had broken out in North Bombay Within an hour of this outbreak, five persons had been killed and sixty-five injured

Munshi toured the affected area in the company of the Chief Presidency Magistrate and an armed Police Inspector. Some streets were deserted, in others, mobs were fighting each other with lathis, iron-bars, and soda-water bottles Upon the approach of Munshi's car, however, the crowds melted away into adjoining lanes

The riots were a challenge to Munshi for it was a popular belief among Englishmen that no Indian could ever maintain law and order in India, and recurrent riots extending sometimes for weeks had become a nightmare in Bombay

Munshi went to the Police headquarters and he installed himself in the Commissioner's chair The old orders passed during earlier riots were fished out and initialled again by the Magistrate, as for April 17, 1938 Under the orders, gatherings of five or more persons, and carrying of lethal weapons were prohibited, and curfew was enforced Action, according to the officers, could only be taken when the orders had been promulgated by publication Instructions were given straightaway to enforce the order

Within an hour, however, the Government Press, suddenly brought into action, began to print off the new orders from old prints, changing only the date, they also prepared to paste the orders on the walls before the next morning The Inspector-General of Prisons was pulled out of his bed in Poona and, on Munshi's instructions, he telephoned his orders to open a temporary 'riot prison' in the Worli Chawls in Bombay

It was midnight Dozens of police vans were on the streets rounding up every one who was moving about in the affected areas Within two hours over a thousand persons, picked up in the affected areas, were being rushed to the temporary prison

At 2 a m Munshi went on a final round of the areas it was deserted, quiet, the police patrol was constantly on the move

Bombay's record of riots had been bad for years But on April 18, Bombay woke up to find a startling situation The riots had come and gone, several persons

had died; many had been wounded And as if by magic prohibitory orders were on the walls, and about two thousand persons housed in the improvised jail

The old record had been broken, a new record had begun.

The next day, all doubtful characters registered at the police *chaukis* were rounded up Busybodies interested in taking credit now wanted to look after the wants of those in custody Munshi choked them off His reasoning was simple: When public order is disturbed, there are no public men and no injured innocents, there are only the Government and those charged with breaking orders

There was always a race among the communities to keep the score of murders even out of a sheer sense of honour If the newspapers reported that more Muslims had been killed, it was their turn to make up the number

Munshi had appealed to the newspapers not to publish the casualties community-wise Some disregarded the request, so Section 144 of the Cr P C was immediately applied to certain newspapers, they could not publish any report of the riots without its being approved by the Public Relations Officer On the third day the order was rescinded

The order under Section 144 of Cr P C was taken on the Courts Though already rescinded, it was declared invalid

Munshi happened to meet the Chief Justice a few days later "Munshi", he said, "I have declared your order invalid "

"My order had the desired effect before you did so" Munshi said

"Next time you will be in difficulties" the Chief Justice said with a laugh

"Don't worry, Sir John," Munshi replied, "if there

are riots again, I will issue a similar order, I will make just a few changes out of respect for you, I don't mind what you do with it after the riots are quelled "

He was shocked "This, from a lawyer like you!," he said.

"My duty is to restore order," Munshi said "Your duty will come after order is restored, and *if* it is restored."

Within two days the city had returned to normal though the feeling of nervousness continued for a couple of days more in localities with mixed population

Immediately these disturbances were over, necessary amendments to the Bombay City Police Act authorising the Commissioner of Police to deport anyone whom he regarded as dangerous or undesirable was taken on hand and the Hindu and the Muslim groups whom Munshi consulted were in favour of such legislation A bill to arm the Commissioner of Police with necessary powers was introduced at the next session of the Assembly by Munshi and carried through expeditiously During the debate on the Bill, Munshi gave an indication of his determination to leave no stone unturned to see that the peace of the City was not left to the mercy of hooligans

Then again, for some days prior to the 1st August 1939, certain individuals belonging to interests opposed to Prohibition had set afloat rumours that disturbances and outbreak of communal rioting would accompany the inauguration of Prohibition in the City on that day Strong precautionary measures were taken as if in full expectation of a major emergency The day was marked by a number of processions in various parts of the City including a big procession and meeting at the Azad Maidan under the auspices of the Prohibition Propaganda Board

A procession which had been decided upon by the

Muslim League—as a protest not against Prohibition, for that would not fit in with the religious principles, but against the Urban Immoveable Property Tax—was taken out from Mohamedally Road to Chhota Quabrastan on Grant Road After passing Pydhowni junction the processionists became very provocative. When the procession reached the Northbrook gardens, there was actually a melee between a crowd of Hindus who had gathered there and the processionists At the same time a large number of Muslims numbering over a thousand were awaiting the procession in Chhota Quabrastan, a short distance away As the procession reached Chhota Quabrastan it became restive and the police, with great difficulty, persuaded them to get into the Chhota Quabrastan The moment they went in, stone throwing on a large-scale at the Police officials and the trams passing by was indulged in by the people inside In spite of repeated appeals and warnings, the crowd persisted in pelting stones, and some of them created scenes even outside The stone throwing caused injuries to four or five conductors and drivers of tram cars besides Police officials. One of the miscreants attempted to smash the head of a Police official with a stone When the situation worsened and became uncontrollable, the Police had to resort to firing in self-defence In all, twenty rounds were fired and seven persons were injured

The action of the authorities was the subject-matter of an inquiry by Mr Justice Broomfield who, however, held that the action of the Police authorities in firing was justified

This incident at Chhota Quabrastan was expected to develop into a major communal disturbance and all necessary precautions were immediately taken But thanks to the Police preparations under the personal

guidance of Munshi, not a single case of assault followed the incidents at Chhota Quabrastan

The wholesome fear that Munshi had created in the minds of the miscreants at the previous attempt at such disturbances was sufficient to unnerve them from indulging in a repetition of their nefarious activities

Munshi's policy in dividing the 'fruits' of communal riots between the offenders was based on strict justice An illustration of his simple justice may be given There was discussion regarding the principle on which compensation for damages arising from a riot should be fixed Munshi said that although it was proper that the community which harbours a riotous element must pay the loss suffered by innocent citizens, it would be wrong to exact this payment from a particular ward of the city In Bombay, the ward is not an independent entity The ward in which a riot takes place is often not responsible for it and certainly not the landlords in that ward who may be living elsewhere Levying compensation from a particular ward has this curious factor, that the landlords of an injured community will have to pay for what their own community has suffered and the aggressor community is immune from 'the burden' The equitable manner in which compensation can be recovered is to levy it on the whole city The principle of exemption is unjust and leads to a keen sense of injustice behind 'I see no reason,' Munshi said, 'to distinguish a J P landlord from an ordinary one,' and to one who has some experience of Bombay it is too much to say that J P 's and knights had never any hand in riots He argued against granting any exemption whatever

V P Menon in his 'Story of the Integration of the Indian States' says that 'I had been particularly impressed by the manner in which, as Home Minister of Bombay

from 1937-39, he (Munshi) had tackled the communal problem there' Menon echoes only what the Viceregal house and I C S. steel frame felt about Munshi's handling of the communal riots

III

During his tenure as Home Minister, Munshi took ample care to see that the police force in his province was maintained in as high a state of efficiency as possible He made inquiries into instances of harassment and oppression alleged against the police, and did not hesitate to punish officers and men responsible for such harassment and oppression Nevertheless when the Broomfield Inquiry Committee's Report was submitted to Government, he publicly recorded his appreciation of the splendid work done by the police In August 1939 when the question was raised of retrenching the salary, allowance and concessions of the Police force, he strongly opposed the suggestion He said

> The Police is a highly organised force, that is its strength But that makes it highly sensitive to any reduction in pay and privileges A police officer is a citizen who hires out not merely his office hours but all his time and energy, and at times even his life, for maintaining conditions in which alone we can hope to survive the difficulties which are ranged against us

In his own administration of affairs, Munshi set before his police force a steady example of justice and fairness, and it had its effect upon the police force under his supervision and control

Presiding over the Police Conference on the 27th of

September 1937, Munshi referring to the functions of the Police force as a whole placed before it the ideals which he felt ought to inspire it. His attempt to make the police aware of the new conditions and the new methods and manner of service under a popular Government showed his earnestness to convert the police from being the agents of torture to the servants of democracy

> Under the new conditions the Police cannot consider themselves merely as upholders of law and order They have to be guardians of peace and democracy, and as such they have to pursue their arduous duties not only with firmness, but tact, patience and sympathy The easy method of maintaining prestige by inspiring fear need not be resorted to by, such a well-trained and efficient force as yours Uphold law by all means without fear and favour, with good humour and without being vindictive, pursue your duties in the spirit of service towards the public, the master whom we all serve, maintain not only order, but the reputation of the Government and the dignity of democratic institutions in this Country, give the same unswerving loyalty to the present Government as you gave to its predecessors, and I assure you that the present Government, with the public confidence which it has the privilege to enjoy, will maintain your prestige and your authority more effectively than was ever done before
>
> No state can exist if this most essential service is infected with the communal virus It is not concerned with communities nor with political preferences It has to keep the ring clear for legitimate freedom of speech and action, controlling all violent tendencies But in this matter, as a public man, let me warn you that the ultimate success or failure of

the efforts will largely depend upon the tact which the Police bring to bear upon a situation

It is better that an officer should honestly confess his inability to investigate a crime, it is better by far to let an accused go unconvicted than that the ends of justice be secured by torture.

But I long to see the day when the Force attains the same dignity, esteem and even the affection of the people here as are enjoyed by the Police in London. Without a Police Force trusted and respected by the public, Democracy can never be successful It is for you, Gentlemen, to co-operate with me in a concrete way to realise this objective

One of the greatest reforms to Munshi's credit was the amalgamation of the cadres of the European Sergeants and the Indian Sub-Inspectors How impressive this achievement was can be appreciated only by those who know how long-standing and intensive was the grievance on this score of the Indian personnel of the Police force in Bombay

Munshi issued orders for the amalgamation of the cadres of Sergeants and Sub-Inspectors to be known as the Sub-Inspectors' cadre The pay scales and conditions of service of the new Sub-Inspectors' cadre were to be the same as those of the Sub-Inspectors' cadre and recruits would be confined ordinarily to statutory natives of India The Anglo-Indians and Domiciled Europeans who were to be recruited in future would be Sub-Inspectors, not sergeants and on the same pay and conditions as Indian Sub-Inspectors, only the Sergeants then in service were to draw their pay and allowances on the prevailing scale In order to equalise the rate of promotion of qualified men then serving as Sergeants and Sub-Inspectors to the rank of Dy Inspectors it was laid down that in future, out of every five vacancies, three posts would go to Sub-Inspectors and

two to Sergeants, instead of the then existing rule whereby a Sergeant and a Sub-Inspector was promoted alternatively A single list of Sub-Inspectors qualified for promotion was to be maintained after the then existing list was exhausted.

Munshi was cognizant that the success of any administration depended very largely upon the character of the police force Corruption existed in the police force in India much more than in any other department of Government, except perhaps Excise He took strong measures to check corruption and to increase otherwise the efficiency of the force But he also pleaded for a more sympathetic and understanding public attitude towards the police He deplored that on occasions speakers at public meeting indulged in attacks on the police and employed even abuses and contemptuous epithets while referring to that public service Such malicious or irresponsible criticism was likely to lower the efficiency of the services and to impair the usefulness of the Government itself Munshi succeeded in creating a sense of harmony between the public and the police

At the Home Ministers' Conference he advocated two reforms (a) an all-India Constabulary (b) and a central school for Indian police

N P A Smith, later the Director of the Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India, was the Commissioner of Police in Bombay when Munshi was the Home Minister He pays tribute to Munshi's work in the following words

> I had the good fortune to serve under Mr K M Munshi in two capacities, as officiating Commissioner of Police, Bombay, and as Joint Secretary to Government in the Home Department Such interest—to anybody but myself—as may lie in my impressions

of him from these two angles will naturally derive mainly from the then still unusual circumstances of an official relationship between a Congress Minister of Government and an officer of the Indian Police Not, you might say, ideal bed-fellows The representative of a nationalist movement which, both in its deliberate manifestations and in its fortuitous consequences, had frequently arrayed itself against the law, and the local head of a police force whose function it had been to maintain the law The stress of long conflict had at times provoked ungenerous action on both sides and had at times also frayed tempers sadly, again, if we are honest, on both sides Would the Congress Ministry and would, in particular, the Home Minister repay old scores against zealous—even, if you wish, over-zealous—members, both officers and men of the police world? Such was the question the police asked each other Would individuals be victimised? Mr Munshi provided the answer It took some little time for realisation to dawn that party prejudice was no part of his disciplinary make-up, but dawn it did and, speaking as a policeman, I can pay no more remarkable tribute to Mr Munshi than to say that police officers today in Bombay City speak gratefully, and even affectionately, of the staunchness of his support I recall a day when at a meeting in the Secretariat over which Mr Munshi presided and which was attended by several officials, he declared his administrative faith "I have been accused by X", he said, X being a very important man in the party organisation, "of supporting the police too strongly I told him that this was only natural as I am now a policeman" It would be unfair to a very fine body of men not to give

the other side of the picture They recognised with a remarkable promptness that they owed allegiance to the authorised government of the day and, I think Mr Munshi will agree, gave him, despite the irritation of much uninformed and some malicious criticism by the public, the full measure of their loyal support. In brief, the police reacted admirably to just treatment and the wise statesmanship of a Minister who realised that no government can function efficiently without an efficient and loyal police force. It will be patent that, in these circumstances, my task as Commissioner of Police, if not exactly a bed of roses—it never can be—was not the Congressional hair-shirt which, in my unwisdom, I might perhaps have anticipated Instead, I found in Mr Munshi one of the kindliest and most helpful official superiors under whom it has been my lot to serve

My experience of him, from my table as Joint Secretary, was not very long-lived for the reason that the Congress Ministry detached itself from government Another facet of his administrative character was, however, obvious even in this brief period; and that was his communal impartiality He laid down broad principles for the treatment of communal disputes, and these were scrupulously observed by the succeeding government and may, for aught I know, be still observed The British eye is at all times keen to spot discriminate treatment I was impressed instead by Mr Munshi's determination to adhere rigidly to the completely impartial, if firm, principles he had himself formulated My respect was the greater in that the communal nettle was one from which the British themselves have always somewhat timorously shrunk

A few general comments in conclusion. If I were asked to specify Mr Munshi's most prominent characteristic, I should be at a loss to choose between his tirelessness, his obvious intellectual capacity and his drive, but running through all these is a thread which is vital to the whole Mr. Munshi, despite his lack of stature—I am sure he will forgive me—is big. He is big in his concepts, big in his tolerances and big in his friendships He is big also in the possession of world views which aid, and do not conflict with, his strong nationalism.

IV

The question of Civil Liberties, to which the Congress stood pledged, was naturally a ticklish one, a Congress Home Minister expected to grant it in fullest measure to a people accustomed to the complete denial of it

In the course of a debate on the subject at the first session of the Assembly, Munshi, on 15th September 1937, expounded his policy·

> Government are fully aware of the pledges given by the Congress in the election manifesto So far, they have done their best to carry out the pledges given by the Congress both in letter and spirit, and will further endeavour to carry them out.
>
> The few cases which remain to be considered require the most careful attention, particularly in view of the fact that the persons and organisations concerned have contacts in more than one province in India Government propose to deal with emergency legislation as early as possible A Government by Congressmen pledged to non-violence in the

struggle for freedom should be the last to resort to emergency legislation in normal times They have to prove by their actions that they can preserve peace better by normal authority than by the use of force In this endeavour to establish the moral authority of Government, they rely upon the goodwill and active support of all concerned

During the debate the opposition had criticised Government for their inability to release V B Gogte, who was undergoing a term of imprisonment for the attempted assassination in 1931 of Sir Earnest Hotson, then acting Governor of Bombay

The opposition thought that it was not possible to secure the release of Gogte very easily and they therefore nade it their point to press it on the notice of the Munshi had seen this already and he had so arrang-ngs that many of his party men also did not know as at was going to happen Munshi had secured the of Sir Earnest Hotson that he had no objection to being released Gogte was already released and hi had asked him to sit in the gallery of the legis- on the very day on which this debate was raised eelings of the House were roused to the highest by very severe comments from the opposition when Munshi rose to reply People hardly knew how Munshi was going to meet the situation, but he had arranged it dramatically and turned the whole scale against his opponents by announcing in the House that not only had Gogte been released but that he was sitting in the gallery hearing the whole debate

The Criminal Tribes Settlements in the province was another sore which was exploited by the critics of Government Some of the members of the Settlement at Sholapur were incited by the Communists to create trouble

Munshi appointed a Committee, with himself as Chairman, to go into the question of Criminal Tribes Settlements in the province As a result of the inquiries of the Committee which visited all the Settlements in the province, a number of reforms were introduced which gave the members of the Settlements more freedom and also opportunity to get over their criminal tendencies

V

Bombay as the industrial capital of India was already the scene of troubles in the employer-employees relations, particularly in the Textile Industry The Communists were active in the Labour Front instilling into them the doctrine of the Divine Right to strike which so often ended in the 'right' to intimidate workers who did not fall in with their party line Munshi had a private interview with a member of the Politbureau of the Communist Party, during which he begged him to give time to the Congress Government He was told that 'as a revolutionary body, it must remain the sole judge as to when and how to strike ' Munshi took up the challenge

To tolerate the violence of a section of the people would have been an abdication of the State's responsibilities, and the Government found itself compelled to assume emergency powers Then began a battle between the Home Minister and the Communist Party In an interview to the *Bombay Chronicle* published in its issue of the 17th November 1937, Munshi gave his reasons for putting into operation these emergency powers

> In both cities (Ahmedabad and Sholapur) the situation brought about is such that small groups of persons carry on a campaign of criminal intimida-

tion against larger bodies of workmen Vociferous abuses and threats are indulged in and violence resorted to Those who are thus intimidated cannot naturally pick up courage to report to the police or make a formal complaint The Congress policy, as I understand it, does not mean that Government should sit with folded hands when violence is used by word and action to intimidate people With a view to making it possible for culprits to be brought to book in the absence of any complaint from the aggrieved parties which by the nature of things are not likely to come forward, Government have been obliged to make an offence under Section 506 of the Indian Penal Code a cognizable and non-bailable one

Such a measure, of course, did not deprive the arrested persons of the right of trial and of appeal Nor was the right of peaceful picketing taken away The police had instructions to 'maintain a strictly neutral attitude so long as an atmosphere of non-violence is maintained by the strikers and then only interfere to protect peaceful citizens from pursuing lawful activities and to bring offenders to trial '

The question of strikes and intimidation soon came to a head with the deliberate policy of the Communists in Bombay to foment industrial trouble and the equally determined attitude of the Home Minister to prevent violence

The Communists were waiting for an opportunity to organise a province-wide strike To start with, their campaign against the Government was on the question of the release of the Communists After the Communists were released, they wanted to utilise the report of the Textile Enquiry Committee for creating labour trouble but the attempt had to be given up as the recommendations of the

Committee were more liberal than what was expected by the workers themselves

When the draft bill of the Industrial Trade Disputes Act was circulated for public opinion, the Trade Unions under the Communists did welcome the measure and were of the opinion that the proposals in the draft bill were 'sound in certain respects' After the receipt of opinions, amongst others, from several Trade Unions which were controlled by Communists, the Bill was revised and introduced in the Assembly on the 2nd of September, 1938. As a protest against the passing of the Industrial Trade Disputes Bill by the Assembly, the Bombay Provincial Trade Union Congress at its meeting held on the 24th September, 1938 passed a resolution for a one-day strike and appointed a Council of Action to give effect to the resolution The strike was originally fixed upon for the 17th October 1938, but the organisers, perhaps in order to have more time, postponed it to the 7th of November, 1938

The members of the Council of Action carried on a virulent propaganda and incited the workers to such an extent that it was feared that the strike on the 7th of November would result in widespread disturbances all over the Province Necessary precautions had been taken on the strike day In Bombay, the Communists, finding their strike unsuccessful, started intimidating workers attending the mills, and throwing stones at mills which were working The strike ultimately assumed the shape of open battles between the workers attending the mills and the strikers At various places the police had to open fire in self-defence and in defence of the workers attending the mills Munshi who along with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was touring in the labour area was himself attacked while in the car, luckily both Sardar and he remained un-

hurt, the rear glass window of the car however was damaged by the hurling of a crowbar by a striker

As was to be expected there was violent criticism of the police firing by Leftist Congressmen and Munshi did not hesitate to appoint forthwith a Committee of inquiry consisting of Justice (now Sir) H J Kania as Chairman and V. F Taraporevala and M C Chagla (later Chief Justice) as members The Committee was requested to inquire into and report on—

(a) the origin, cause, nature and extent of the disturbances which took place in the City of Bombay as a result of the strike on the 7th November 1938

(b) whether the precautionary measures and the action taken by the authorities before and during the strike were adequate and justified

(c) such other matters as may be germane to the above

The statement presented by Government to the Committee was in its final form prepared by Munshi himself. The statement which ran to nearly 139 pages surveyed the Communist activities in the country since the Kanpur Communist Conspiracy case in 1924 It referred to the spread of Communist activities all over the country, their mode of organisation and working in Bombay, the 1929 disturbances in Bombay which, the Percival Committee held, was caused by the activities of the Red Flag Union, and the Meerut Conspiracy case in which the Allahabad High Court held 'that a Communist Party in India was formed and existed in British India, that this party was closely connected with the Communist International and that membership of the party was confined to persons who subscribed to the programme laid down by the Communist International, that the members of the party in India had undoubtedly formed a revolutionary party with the pro-

fessed object of overthrowing the present order of society and bringing about the complete independence of India by means of armed uprisings of the proletariat and that this was not a distant but an immediate object.

The aims and methods of Communism were set out and the statement further summarised the activities of the Communist party since the formation of the Congress government in Bombay, the strikes that they had organised since, the decision of the B P T U C to observe a day's general strike and the appointment of a council of action, immediately followed by a virulent propaganda by the leading Communists attacking the Congress Ministry for bringing forward the Industrial Trade Disputes Bill which was termed by them as 'the black bill' All the speeches of the Communist leaders were set out *in extenso;* the happenings on the 17th November, 1938 were detailed

The Committee after enquiry submitted its report on the 25th of January 1939, and held that the origin of the disturbances was to be traced to the combination of the Communist Party as represented by the B P T U C and Dr Ambedkar's Independent Labour Party on an anti-Congress platform and their incitement of the workers to violence to make the strike declared by them successful.

As regards the causes, the Committee held that the disturbances started only when the leaders and strikers realised that the strike was a failure, that preparations and intensive propaganda to make the strike successful had proved futile As the strikers had been told to make the strike successful by any and every means at their disposal, violence was naturally resorted to when peaceful methods failed Stone-throwing at mills after 8 a m was intended to terrorise the workers who had gone in and to force them to come out The assaults and stone-throwing on workers who went out for their meal were clearly with the inten-

tion of striking terror in the minds of those who went out and preventing their return Assaults on the workers who were returning from work in the evening, and especially on those who had returned to the mill chawls after the day's work, were sheer acts of revenge.

The Committee held that they were satisfied that, consistently with the policy of Government, the authorities took such precautionary measures to meet the situation as could be reasonably foreseen by them

After going through the facts with regard to each of the various firings resorted to by the Police in self-defence and in defence of the workers desiring to go to work, the Committee held that they were all justified Thus Munshi's attempts to preserve law and order were not only efficacious but fully vindicated by all canons of justice.

VI

The Congress Ministry was pledged to the return of the lands forfeited during the civil disobedience movements for non-payment of agricultural assessment On forfeiture these lands had been auctioned off and purchased by 'loyalists' for nominal prices

When the proposal was taken on hand, immediately after the assumption of office by the Congress, of compensating from the public purse people who had suffered financially on account of pursuing a party policy, critics said that it would have dangerous repercussions on the finances of the province Such a policy, it was said, was without a precedent Gandhiji however was of the opinion that on grounds of equity people who acquired land at a nominal price to suit the repressive action of British Government had no right to retain it after the exigency was over, that

the Congress Government was pledged to restore the lands. The administrative efforts of the Congress Ministry to restore those lands were infructuous and it fell to Munshi to get them restored to the original owners by undertaking legislation on the lines indicated by Gandhiji

The clause with regard to compensation to the holders of the land was the one much debated upon in and outside the legislature The following letter of Mahadev Desai in this connection would be read with interest:

> I wonder if you ever read the *Indian Social Reformer* There is in the issue of July 9, a stupid and most mischievous note on the lands question The writer calls the contemplated legislation 'confiscatory' In view of this and other criticisms, Bapu and I think that a preamble indicating the purpose of the legislation is absolutely essential You must make it clear to the world that the old transactions were fraudulent and that the wrong must be righted It is no use the Governor insisting on the omission of this preamble I think Bapu's draft makes all these abundantly clear But I thought I must pass this on to you, lest there should be any mistake

The preamble of the Bill as introduced in the legislature was as under

> Whereas certain lands were forfeited as a result of the Civil Disobedience Movement for the non-payment of land revenue and other sums due to Government, and whereas the said lands were disposed of to certain persons for inadequate consideration; and whereas it is just and expedient to acquire them with a view to restore them to the original holders thereof, it is hereby enacted as follows

Under the Bill, compensation payable to the purchasers

of the forfeited land from Government was the amount paid by them, the amount of expenditure incurred by them in making improvements to the lands, the land revenue paid by them since their acquisition, interest at 4 per cent on the total of the three previous items, plus 15 per cent of the foregoing. In the case of those holders who had purchased the lands in good faith from those who had purchased from Government, the compensation was the price paid, the cost of improvement, plus 15 per cent of the total of both

The return of the confiscated lands was a cardinal issue on which Congress had pledged itself to the electorate. It was Munshi's tact and firmness that ultimately secured justice

VII

Congress had been pledged to Prohibition and soon after assumption of office in 1937, the Working Committee passed a resolution to the effect that the Congress-governed provinces should introduce complete prohibition within a period of three years Dr M D D Gilder was the Minister-in-charge, and he inaugurated the campaign with thoroughness

After introducing Prohibition in some mofussil areas, the Bombay Government announced their decision to introduce total prohibition in the City of Bombay as from the 1st of August 1939, and two dry days in a month for the three industrial towns of Sholapur, Hubli and Dhulia

A most important question was the machinery which was to enforce Prohibition Munshi's stand was that an independent Excise Force was not the appropriate machinery and that Prohibition can succeed only if drink was

made an offence which the ordinary Police Force was bound to deal with like any other ordinary offence. After a protracted struggle Munshi gained his point and, thereafter, he came to be closely associated with Dr. Gilder in introducing Prohibition

The liquor trade in Bombay was mainly in the hands of Parsis, and as soon as the Prohibition policy of Government was announced, they became restive When the announcement of complete Prohibition in the city was made, they, with the help of those opposed to the Congress government, started a movement to foil the introduction of Prohibition in the province The crusader in Munshi readily took up the challenge and he shouldered the responsibility for carrying on propaganda in favour of Prohibition, explaining the policy of Government and pointing out the fallacy of the anti-prohibitionist stand From the month of May till the 1st of August there was not a week in which Munshi did not address a mammoth meet-
ing out the fallacy of the anti-prohibitionist stand From
thing to organise the prohibition propaganda

At a meeting addressed at the Sir Cowasji Jehangir Hall on the 9th May 1939 Munshi thus put the case for Prohibition

> Drink is not a necessity nor is it nourishment. It is at best a luxury Alcoholism has destroyed the best bodies and the finest brains in the world On the contrary no one ever died of having given up drink, nor did any one feel sorry for having done so. Drink is the source of inefficiency and crime
>
> Indian sentiment since ages has looked upon it as a vice and crime, and in fighting it we are fighting for a clean life
>
> But there are some friends who try to warn us against Prohibition by quoting America's failure.

> The case of America is not on all fours with India's It did not possess our tradition, our habits or our sentiment in this matter And even if we have to face some of the difficulties which America had to face, we shall cheerfully do so It is better to fight gangsterdom than to see our manhood destroyed by the corrosive influence of alcohol

The manner in which Munshi conducted this meeting showed the extreme patience with which he carried on the entire Prohibition propaganda in spite of provocations, occasionally of the worst type The C J Hall had almost been captured by the anti-prohibitionists and the platform came to be strewn with missiles and rotten eggs At every stage of the meeting the crowd, bent upon mischief, raised all sorts of slogans against Prohibition and the Ministry With all these provocations, Munshi carried the meeting through—though it took about seven hours—delivered his speech and showed to the anti-Prohibitionists the grim determination with which he was going ahead with his plans

Munshi's speeches in the City covered every aspect of the reform and left no scope for the anti-Prohibitionist propaganda

The weekly bulletin published by the Prohibition Propaganda Board, the posters depicting the evils of drink displayed prominently all over the City, and other prohibition literature published by the Prohibition Propaganda Board showed the determination with which the Government was approaching the introduction of prohibition in the City The imposing procession of the citizens of Bombay to the Azad Maidan and the mammoth meeting held there on August 1, 1939 were indications of the popular desire in the City for the introduction of Prohibition

Besides propaganda, the effective enforcement of the Prohibition in the City also engaged Munshi's attention long before the date fixed for its introduction. The creation of a separate branch of the Police Force in the City for enforcement was completed long before the date, and all those who had been in the Excise Department and who could be absorbed in the new branch of the police force were so absorbed In the result Munshi, as the head of the Home Department, within the very short time at his disposal succeeded in enforcing the prohibition scheme in the City of Bombay.

VIII

It is a measure of the many-sided achievements of Munshi as Home Minister that he was able to give the Indian horse his rightful place He reorganised the Turf Club, the membership became predominantly Indian, the Indian horse and jockey came into their own, a horse-breeding industry, valued at five crores came into existence, the Indian horse began to win foreign races, a grateful Turf Club founded an annual event, the Munshi Cup Race

The Western India Turf Club is a public Company for making profit out of horse-racing and betting By virtue of clause 6 of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, only a limited number of club and stand members are entitled to divide between them all the profits derived practically from the public Munshi felt that the principal justification for giving a monopoly to the company was the need of raising of an Indian breed of horses. it was, therefore, wrong that a large amount of money should be sent out every year to foreign countries to buy

foreign breeds of horses. The Club members and horse breeders were aghast at Munshi's proposals, for they felt that the reputation of the Western India Turf Club would go down if it had to work under the limitations sought to be imposed by the Home Minister

On the 17th of December 1937, Munshi gave an interview to the Stewards of the Royal Western India Turf Club. He stated to them that the following considerations would weigh with the Government before it granted a further licence to the Turf Club

'The R W I T C was a public company which made profit out of the gambling propensities of the public by reason of the monopoly that had been granted by Government, the members of the Club had invested very little money of their own and their liability on winding up was one rupee only, and such monopoly could not be allowed to exist in the interests of the club members or against the interests of the public'

The representatives of the Club were therefore requested to consider the following (a) that at least 55 per cent of the membership be Indian, (b) that a substantial part of the money recovered by the Company or spent on horse racing in connection with this company should be spent in India, (c) that the Company should pay a licence fee calculated on the average net annual profits of the Company, (such profits to be calculated on the basis of expenses reasonably incurred and a reasonable amount for depreciation), and (d) that a scheme should be placed before Government by which within a reasonable time import of foreign horses and employment of foreign jockeys could be reduced

As a result of the negotiations between the Turf Club and Government, the necessary reforms were introduced in the Turf Club, the prominent one being its Indianisation.

Mr Fali Wadia, Vice-President of the National Horse Breeders and Show Society of India, thus writes on Munshi's contribution to horse breeding in India

> The licence of the Royal Western India Turf Club Ltd, went before Sjt. K M Munshi as Home Member for renewal The Club executive, then dominated by non-Indians, attempted to resist Munshi's scheme, but with characteristic vigour and firmness, he made it clear that unless the Turf was Indianised, it would not be allowed to continue. He demanded among other things the reservation of races for Indian Breds and the allocation to them of 45 per cent of the total stake money within five years This factor alone was responsible for the immediate setting up of the existing Horse Breeding Industry in Western India—an Industry which in time to come will be of considerable benefit to the country as a whole Immense possibilities exist of developing schemes for the introduction of the horse into agricultural economy of our country nor must the importance of the horse be overlooked for defence and internal security purposes, in spite of modern mechanisation Munshi realised that racing was not to be considered in itself, only as a sport or as a business, but as a prime necessity for the establishment of an indigenous Horse Breeding Industry today If this new industry is fostered and allowed to grow, in time to come the home-bred horse will find his rightful place to bear the country's economy and the seed sown by Munshi will then bear its full fruit

IX

Bombay was the first province to pass a Bill for the removal of disabilities of Harijans in regard to worship in temples By clause 3 of the Harijan Temple Entry Bill passed on 1st February 1938, the trustees or majority of trustees of a temple were empowered to make a declaration that such temple should be open to the Harijans notwithstanding anything contained in the terms of instrument of trust, the terms of dedication or a decree or order of a competent court relating to such temple or custom, usage or law

Munshi was in charge of piloting the Bill and while moving first reading in the Assembly, he traced the history of the movement since 1920 when the Indian National Congress put the removal of untouchability as a part of its programme After referring to Gandhiji's 'fast unto death' in 1932 which resulted in the Yeravada Pact and the movement among the Hindus in favour of eradication of untouchability, he mentioned how, in the course of the movement, legal difficulties came in the way of the temples being thrown open to the Harijans

While referring to the attitude of the Sanatanists to the question of the opening of temples to Harijans, Munshi spoke passionately for justice to the Untouchables, scripture or no scripture

> The other class is of the extreme Sanatanist, whose notions of Hinduism are so wonderful that he will not and cannot be reconciled to the opening of the temples to the Harijans He believes that his Hinduism is an arrogant creed which bases its existence on the superiority of one caste over the other. His faith is in social inequality He believes in hereditary social injustice to be perpetuated not only

> outside but even inside temples. He feels that his God is so brittle that if a Harijan came and looked at it, its Godliness would break. Sir, it is a very unfortunate mentality, though I am very glad to say that it is restricted to a very few

His deep understanding of Hinduism came to his aid in fighting those who would interpret the scriptures in such a way as to destroy its well-known catholicity

> It (Hinduism) is a world culture which knows no racial arrogance, no social inequality The social structure of Hindu India is entirely different from the spirit of Hinduism and we do hope that Hinduism will be purged of its greatest disgrace of which really we feel ashamed If I may go a little further, I would say—I am only stating my personal view—that if the *Shastras* are such that they preach—as a matter of fact they do not do so—social inequality for generation after generation, it will be no religion—it will be no Hinduism We would be untrue to the Nation and to the whole spirit of Hinduism if we allowed such notions of social inequality to be perpetuated in times like this

Sabbath was made for man, not man for Sabbath, taught Christ to the Scribes and Pharisees who came to denounce him for non-observance of the Sabbath It was the spirit of that teaching that seems to have inspired this crusader against untouchability when he unhesitatingly said that even Scriptures must go to the flames if they were the sanction behind man's inhumanity to men

X

During his regime as Home Minister a difficult situation arose in the neighbouring State of Hyderabad, where

an agitation was started by the Arya Samaj and Hindu Mahasabha against the anti-Hindu policy of the Nizam's Government This gave Munshi the opportunity of stating in the most specific terms the policy of the Provincial Government in regard to political movements in Indian States. In a couple of interviews with the Nizam's representatives he made the position clear·

(1) The Bombay Government would help Hyderabad where a newspaper champions the overthrow of the Nizam or his dynasty or where it seeks to create inter-communal discord likely to result in violence between communities in the Province Under this principle *Vaidik Sandesh* was warned when it attacked the Muslim faith.

(2) The Government will give to the press the same liberty of criticising Hyderabad which it enjoys as regards the criticism of Bombay Government itself.

(3) Incitement of or preparation for violence in any shape or form would be taken notice of and dealt with. Action was taken against *Garjana* under the Press Act when incitement to violence was urged against the Maharaja of Gondal

(4) Bombay Government would give to the Nizam's Government all information as may be required and which a friendly state would be bound to give It will not stop men proceeding to Hyderabad territory with an intention which, if carried out, may amount to a breach of its law there

At the same time he stated that the Bombay Government were not prepared to pull Hyderabad's chestnuts out of the fire by taking executive action dealing with the political agitation against that State, or even by converting itself into an agency for scrutinising newspapers etc, on behalf of any Indian State

XI

As regards the political activities of teachers and students in schools, Munshi boldly departed from the earlier Government's policy and notified that pupils and schoolmasters were free to attend all public meetings at which ideas involving class hatred or organised or unorganised violence were not directly or indirectly disseminated; that they were free to become members of organisations other than those whose policy or programme involved the dissemination of class hatred and violence or the use of violence immediately, that they might take part in the activities of all educational, social and religious associations so long as they did not join in any strike or protracted demonstration, which would interfere with the studies, but that students might not become members of the Committees of any political organisation or organisations having communal antagonism as their aim or take an active part in furthering its activities

The head of the institution was declared to be the final judge of whether a meeting, organisation or any activity fell under one or the other of the aforesaid heads

In accordance with the conception of a modern State's duty towards its citizens, primary education was reorganised by Munshi as the first charge on the State's revenues. For the same reason he thought it could not be permitted to continue under the control of a multitude of small agencies

While participating in the debate on a resolution of Government on primary education in the Province on the 19th September 1937 Munshi outlined a new conception of educational activity

> At the present moment, the unit of educational activity is an approved school, that in my opinion

> is not the proper way in which this question should be tackled The unit should really be the teacher. We need not be very emphatic at the present moment about an approved school, an approved building, absolutely well-trained teachers, a fine compound, provision for games, and the rest of it If we are able to have teachers who could go, sit down anywhere and start education, we would have achieved our purpose in a much shorter time than under the present scheme.

He deprecated the habit of laying down 'absolutely prohibitive standards' and then complaining that education was not spreading fast enough, and recommended a method more familiar with the Indian mind than the English method which required every kind of equipment before starting a school. Such a method would include the utilisation of the services of the volunteers in their hundreds and thousands who would be ready to hold part time schools merely as a matter of service, and of the many wealthy people who would be very willing to assist Government in organising primary schools in their taluka or district

On the vexed question of the *lingua franca*, he 'admired' the efforts to have Hindi as the *lingua franca* of India, but pleaded for a sense of proportion in the matter of its introduction He said:

> The *lingua franca* is not expected to be a substitute for the mother-tongue (Hear, Hear) Hindustani or Hindi is to be the medium for the whole country but it is to be a second language in my opinion, and it is only through the medium of the mother-tongue that you can give primary education so as to evoke the best in a student

Munshi brought the question of Greater Bombay to a successful issue, a question that had been pending decision for a number of years To him there appeared several reasons which made the need for a greater Bombay imperative As he later pointed out in the *Social Welfare*, when the scheme was again taken up by the Bombay Government, if the idea was to succeed it would be desirable to completely absorb the additional area for all purposes of administration, including revenue, police, judicial and civil administration He could foresee that the Bombay Municipality would grumble at the suggestion, but he was confident in his mind that such attitude on the part of the municipality would be short-sighted, for what it spent would be repaid several times by the growth of the City in a few years' time

XII

When the Congress ministries resigned in 1939, there was a general feeling in the country that the policy of office acceptance had more than justified itself. Munshi was bracketted with C Rajagopalachari of Madras and Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant of the United Provinces; they were declared to be the ablest Home Ministers that provincial autonomy had thrown up

Even those who had started out as carping critics ended by paying tribute to Munshi A notable example was W W Russel, a member of the European group in the Bombay Legislative Assembly His analysis of Munshi is interesting, since it comes from one who had no love for the Congress

> Many Europeans were of the opinion at that time that their members in the Assembly would find

themselves automatically in opposition to the Congress Government on every issue, but it soon became evident—at any rate to all of us European members—that far from being in opposition, more often than not we agreed with the policy of Government and that the ministry on their part were anxious for our support, despite the fact that they possessed a comfortable majority in the House

I think one of the most potent factors in bringing about this somewhat unexpected situation was the personality and character of Mr K M Munshi I have spoken with many Englishmen who have lived in the Bombay Presidency far longer than I have, all of whom are of the opinion that Bombay has never been served by such a strong and capable Home Member as Mr Munshi proved himself to be from 1937 to 1939 What particularly stands out in my memory of those early legislative days is the clarity of his speech and the economy of his words—whether he was speaking on Land Tenure, Education, or Industrial Disputes, his grasp of the subject was profound and his exposition was as clear as the water in a Pacific lagoon

Apart from Mr Munshi's outstanding ability as parliamentarian and administrator, I also recall many delightful informal encounters with him in the lobby and the Committee rooms Perhaps a quotation from the diary dated the 15th September 1938, when the Bombay Trade Disputes Bill was passing through the various stages of legislation will indicate the impression he made on one Englishman at that time

The Trade Disputes Bill continued and Dr

Ambedkar delivered a pompous talk extolling the workers' divine right to strike We had some interesting lobby work and I managed after some negotiations with Nagindas Master, the Premier and Munshi to fix up a meeting in one of the Committee rooms between Munshi, Stones, Cooke and Saklatwala to discuss our own amendments, in view of there being no Select Committee From our point of view, this was vastly more satisfactory and we made progress, Munshi agreeing to accept a number of our points and giving satisfactory assurances on others. His mind moves like lightning, so fast in fact that he can hardly be bothered to speak consecutively; he stops a sentence in the middle and carries on about something else, as if his mind had got to the end ages before his lips, which makes things rather difficult for his listeners

I have met many of the leading statesmen and politicians of India during my ten years in this remarkable and romantic country, but I can say with all sincerity that Mr Munshi has by far the clearest brain of all of those that I have met, furthermore, he understands the vital necessity of preserving law and order during these anxious days of transition from foreign Government to National Independence. It is one thing to have good ideas and a good brain. It is quite another to have the strength of character to put your ideas into practice especially if by doing so you are courting unpopularity Mr Munshi has convictions and the courage to put them into practice. He is without a doubt a Leader

CHAPTER VI

A LONE TRAIL

I

WITH the commencement of the long foreseen World War II in September 1939, a rupture between the Congress and the British Government looked inevitable, though to a handful of Congressmen like Munshi such a rupture was not only unnecessary but also undesirable. It was felt by them that Britain did not really want to break with Congress if its co-operation in the war was assured. And the radicals within the Congress, who were looking forward impatiently to Britain's difficulty as India's opportunity, found in Lord Linlithgow's tactless declaration of India being in the war against the Axis without as much as even a consultation with the popular leaders the occasion for precipitating a 'last struggle' against British Imperialism.

But Gandhiji, as a Satyagrahi, yearned for peace and refused to take advantage of Britain's difficulty. He wanted India to help Britain and democracy against Nazism if only she could do so as a free Nation. After the experience of working the Government of India Act in the provincial sphere, Munshi had come to realise the benefits which it provided as a centralising force against the prevailing centrifugal tendencies. He found Lord Linlithgow anxious to work in continual co-operation with the Congress to bring in a new era with the Federal part of the Act in operation. In the course of a talk with Munshi in 1939 Lord Linlithgow said:

> Sec. 93 is a nightmare. You cannot get away from me, and I cannot get away from you. The circumstances daily arising in India and the world render that impossible.

Munshi was among the few who keenly felt at this juncture the need for preserving the unity of the country and therefore, of a strong government at the Centre for dissolving the Hindu-Muslim antagonism

In these circumstances he was naturally anxious to explore the possibilities of continuing the peaceful co-operation established between Indian nationalism and Britain His personal friendship and influence with the Bombay Governor, Sir Roger Lumley, stood him in good stead in that task From Gandhiji he got the following message containing his terms for co-operation, which were promptly conveyed to the proper quarters

> 1 I know that my views in regard to unconditional co-operation are not shared by the country The resolution of the Working Committee reflects the Congress opinion properly
>
> 2 Since the Congress is unable, owing to past experience, to give unconditional co-operation, it can only co-operate if it is able to convince the country that it has in substance achieved its purpose and that therefore there is a complete understanding about it between the British Government and the Congress
>
> 3 If there is a real understanding between the British Government and the Congress it follows that there must be corresponding action even during the war Thus Ministers must not be mere registering agencies of the measures coming from the Centre Hence there must be some method at the Centre for having a Congress representation sufficient to give it a majority
>
> 4 The only constitutional way in which the Ministries can declare their position is to obtain the necessary authority of their respective legislatures by getting them to adopt this resolution unless in the

meantime they can convince their legislatures that circumstances in terms of 2 and 3 have come into existence which render such resolution unnecessary.

5 If the British Government are serious in their professions that they are fighting for democracy, they cannot marshal the moral opinion of the world in their favour except by declaring that India will be a free and democratic country at the end of the war and that in the meantime it has taken steps to implement the assurance so far as it is practicable under martial conditions

6 If for some reason the British Government takes a different view the Ministers will find it impossible to function

7 The resolution may be kept back for a week if the members of the War Sub-Committee agree But it must be clearly understood that before the A I C C meets, the Working Committee which meets on the 4th must have definite material to give the lead to the A I C C and the country

The attempt failed, as the offer was rejected by the British Government, although the eminently reasonable nature of the stand of Gandhiji must have been obvious to any fair mind

The Congress could not tolerate the humiliation of seeing the nation treated like a slave in the forced service of a Britain at war and decided that the provincial ministries must resign in protest Along with his colleagues in the Cabinet, Munshi resigned in November 1939

It was known to a few that Munshi personally did not favour the Congress ministries quitting office He saw the possibility of their remaining in office and making themselves an indispensable ally of the Centre holding the organisation, the country and its resources in their hands,

preparatory to gaining power at the Centre But the British suspicion of Congress intentions was as strong as the impatience of radical Congressmen to go forward

Frustrated in his constructive effort for peace, Munshi did not embrace a policy of inactivity He founded the *Social Welfare,* an English weekly, the first issue of which came out on September 9, 1940 Hardly had it run for 12 weeks when Munshi was selected among others by Gandhiji to take part in his individual Satyagraha campaign On 4th December he was arrested and taken away for detention under Rule 26 of the Defence of India Rules Owing to serious deterioration in his health, however, he was released in the middle of March 1941.

II

Even while taking a badly needed rest at Almora, Munshi expressed himself unequivocally against Britain losing one by one her opportunities to gain Indian friendship Under the title 'Lost Opportunity' he wrote on May 8, 1941 in *Social Welfare* bewailing Britain's lost opportunity to keep India as her enthusiastic partner That was both a word of warning to Britain and of advice to India

> Neither armed might nor cunning diplomacy helps a nation to survive The might of Rome is no more The craft of England has carried it no further Survival is only for the people who believe in the moral order, who have tenacity to stand fast to their group idea, who know the art of winning life being ready to die for it, who can immolate themselves for their ideals

Even the friend of Indo-British understanding could

see "Quit India" on the horizon L S Amery kept on harping on his pet theme of the August offer of the British Government and the need for agreement among all the parties and communities in India while Munshi saw in it only an ill-concealed determination not to transfer to Indians the reality of power at the Centre either during the war or after it

Munshi was still in Nainital when communal riots broke out in many cities like, Dacca, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Cawnpore The news of the goonda elements trying to overawe the law-abiding everywhere and worse, of innocent citizens helplessly awaiting the police or running away was shocking to him in the extreme He called it 'cowardice in excelsis' But he felt more humiliated than enraged For he could see that 'cowards will always create bullies'

Writing on 22nd May in his journal he traced the source of the riots and showed the remedy

> Riots are not signs of political, religious or communal differences They are outbursts of the predatory instincts of the goondas in a community Politics, religion or communalism only exploits these instincts for its own purposes by creating the necessary ferment In civilised societies, differences would be settled without parties stooping to stage blood-baths If the law-abiding, who form a large majority in every society, resist violent attacks on life and property, the lawless will soon give up attempts to overawe them by force

In preaching the message of resistance to the goonda and all that the goonda stood for, he foresaw Noakhalis and Tipperahs as the inevitable consequence of mass cowardise

> Today lawlessness stalks over our fair cities

> and fairer village sides. Tomorrow our shrines may be desecrated, our women dishonoured. The day after, India's territorial integrity may be threatened by gangsters seeking to dominate the world Shall we face all these dangers by running away? At all times, is there not a duty, both legal and moral, to arrest the wrong-doer, to resist evil?

And without contenting himself with preaching personal courage he also showed the methods of resisting the goondas by methods other than those of goondaism

These riots which so often meant the loss of numerous innocent lives and the degradation of society into a group of cowards at the mercy of the goondas gave Munshi an occasion for very serious thought on the scope of non-violence as a principal remedy Ever since the days of Bardoli, when he first saw non-violence at work and more particularly since he joined the Salt Satyagraha, he had accepted the principle of non-violent resistance to the evil represented by an alien state But here was non-violence apparently failing as a practical remedy against organised goondaism Was not non-violence becoming the excuse of the coward, the opportunity for the bully and the humiliation of a whole society? 'Running away from evil is a greater sin than the evil itself,' he wrote on May 22. 'Moments come in every man's life when he may not, dare not, evade duty Death in the discharge of such a duty becomes an unfading crown of glory which heroes alone can wear'

The 'moment' seemed to have come in Munshi's own life His whole spirit revolted against the idea of submission to the new terror of the goonda regime that was fast spreading and was bound to envelop the whole country in violence There was raging an inner conflict within him between his duty as a Congressman pledged to non-

violence at all times and his duty to his own conscience and convictions As a climax to this conflict came Gandhiji's own instructions to Congressmen to get out of the Congress if they favoured violent resistance and, if they stayed within, not to associate themselves with any form of training for violent resistance Was he to follow the Mahatma in his doctrine of Non-violence or follow his own Truth as the Mahatma himself had taught him to do?

III

The conflict took shape in a letter which Munshi forthwith wrote from Naini Tal on May 26 seeking guidance of his *Guru* in the difficult situation that faced him In that letter Munshi confessed inability to reconcile himself to the Mahatma's injunctions not to have anything to do with violence in any form As the letter is of historical interest, we make no apology for quoting it in full

Nainital, May 26, 1941

My Dear Bapu,

Please excuse the language, but as my thoughts have, in this instance, taken shape in English they had best be expressed through that medium I am seriously perturbed since yesterday morning when I read your letter to Shri Bhogilal Lala in the morning papers I will quote two material paras

(1) Those (Congressmen) who favour violent resistance (by way of self-defence) must get out of the Congress and shape their conduct just as they think fit and guide the others accordingly

(2) A Congressman may not directly or indirectly associate himself with gymnasia where training in violent resistance is given.

Forgive me if I cannot reconcile myself to these injunctions Since Pakistan has been in action at Dacca, Ahmedabad, Bombay and other places, it is clear that such riots are going to be a normal feature of our life for some years If war comes to India's frontiers or the British machinery of maintaining order weakens, they will perhaps grow more frequent and intense if a division of India is sought to be enforced by internal or external agencies through organised violence If life, home and shrine and honour of women is threatened by *goondaism,* organised resistance in self-defence appears to me to be a paramount and inalienable duty, whatever form such resistance may take Do you include 'akhadas' in the gymnasia where training in violent resistance is given? I may inform you that for the last fifteen years and more I have been associated with the 'akhada' movement in the presidency both directly and indirectly I presided over two conferences, one at Bombay and the other at Poona, to organise it on a systematic line I have still unofficial connections with several 'akhadas' I deem them an essential machinery for training our race in the art of self-defence During the last many years they have played a great part in giving us some self-confidence to resist *goondaism.* In spite of the great efforts which I have made since yesterday, I have failed to convince myself that my views as expressed in an article I wrote a fortnight ago and published in the *Social Welfare* of the 22nd May, 1941, require a revision I am sending you a copy of the article for ready reference

Since I came to you in 1930, you have been more to me than a political leader You have been to the whole

of our family a father. You have been a beacon for the last ten years lighting me on the path of the little spirituality that I can lay claim to. Hence the pain I feel in confessing that I have searched in vain for a way out of this conflict. I can, of course, keep quiet or can acquiesce in what you say or can, for fear of losing my Congress association and your confidence,—both precious possessions of my life,—voice your sentiments and go my way or do nothing. But something in me rebels against such a course. You have been to me the embodiment of truth and I would lose my self-respect, my right to pray to God if I pretend to follow you with such mental reservations. I cannot pledge myself not to preach, help, organise or sympathise with organised resistance to violence in self-defence by all possible means. I do not want to be dishonest to myself nor to the country whose integrity is now threatened nor do I desire to deny myself your inspiration and guidance in this dilemma. Please let me know what I should do.

My wife is leaving Nainital on the 28th and has already written to you. I am leaving again for Kausani. I will start from here on June 9 and will be in Bombay on the 11th. Will the 12th or the 13th suit you to see me at Sevagram? My eyes are still troubling me. Except for them I am quite fit. My wife joins me in sending you our profound respect.

Yours,
K. M. MUNSHI

To this letter, Gandhiji immediately replied inviting Munshi to discuss the matter with him personally.

> I have your transparent letter. I don't mind your having written it in English. I would not for a moment tolerate your suppressing your thoughts or

simply parroting my views It would not become either of us

You have the fullest liberty of thought and expression If there is an error, there is nothing to prevent us from correcting it But do remember that non-violent resistance is far superior to violent resistance And if that is so, how can a votary of non-violence resort to violence? I have already made it absolutely clear that violent resistance becomes the duty of those who have no faith in non-violence

But I would ask you not to worry about these things while you are there Go to Kausani and soothe your eyes with the darshan of the Dhaval-giri snows Do stay there longer, if you must, for the sake of your eyes There is no hurry at all This work will be there, awaiting you no matter when you return after full recovery Do come on your return to Bombay

IV

Munshi had a long and frank discussion with Gandhiji He also discussed the matter with Sardar Patel who was then under detention in the Yeravada Jail Sardar wrote to Munshi on 22nd June as follows —

My Dear Kanubhai

I pondered deeply over the matter after you left me I also came to know about the discussion you had with your Guruji I have already indicated my opposition to the same It must not have escaped your notice that there is one thing arising out of that discussion which requires consideration viz, whatever you do, do it after mature consideration Please see that the remedy does not turn out to be worse than

the disease There is every possibility that if any split (in the party) is caused you will be blamed and held responsible for the same, and you will have greater responsibility on your shoulders If you take the risk of creating a split (in the party) great things will be expected of you and if you cannot fulfil these expectations, greater damage will be done to you and the institution Please consider this carefully After all everything rests in the hands of God Man can achieve nothing We can only rest content with doing whatever we feel right Do whatever you decide to do after consultations with all your colleagues The idea about (the existence of) the old group is not at all worth considering

It is possible that there might be great misunderstanding about you two joining different parties, and I feel that the advice given to you by Bapu is quite proper.

The situation obtaining in Bombay is terrible Do you think any organised front against it well-nigh possible? How can a few volunteers, even if they believe in defensive violence, be match for those who stab from behind and then flee? The real remedy for it must be something quite different Hence it would be worthwhile only if you can find out the true remedy for this malady, otherwise it will hardly serve any purpose if you hastily jump into the fray

When the trouble broke out at Ahmedabad, the people were taken by surprise Had there been a good number of persons to put up a fight against it, everything would have been saved or alternatively, there would have been a heavy massacre But the situation at present is quite different The atmos-

phere also appears to be quite different Mature consideration is needed to find a way out of this

Under the present circumstances, it is necessary that there should be an exact idea of the result that might be brought about by any steps taken Otherwise, any misfired action would only mean jumping from the frying pan into the fire

You must have seen Rajendrababu and Kripalani

Please write to me after you return from Wardha Please come and see me, if possible

Please take proper care of your health

Remember me to Smt Lilavati

Blessings to the children

VALLABHBHAI

P S To-day's fresh incidents are very terrible In view of this do not take any hasty steps

To Sardar's affectionate letter, Munshi replied as ollows

I received your letter dated the 22nd yesterday. You must have, however, known that Bapu has already given his final decision Revered Bapu, Rajendraprasad, Kripalani and myself have spared no efforts in deliberating over the issue It was because of this that I had not accepted the position in the initial stage, and had asked for more time so as to be able to consult friends like you and others When I sought an interview, it was precisely to secure your advice, and so far as I was able to understand you, it appeared to me that you were in full agreement with Bapu's views.

I actually did not want to go out of the Congress on this question How could I think of separating myself from persons like Bapu and dear friends like you? Hence Bapu alone can tell the shock I experienced when he showed this way to me I expressed my desire to go back to jail, failing this I even suggested that I may utilise, nay waste, my time by solely devoting myself to the profession But Bapu's desire was very clear He did not approve of either of the courses According to him the best course was that I should leave

There is no desire of starting the old group or the party In the case of Lilavati, Bapu's advice will be final In all probability, within a short time, she might be there to give you company At present, I am, as it were, being tossed on the high seas Bapu and you are so inextricably interwoven in my life that I almost feel like an orphan But I have felt it right to follow the course of duty pointed out by Bapu after careful consulation with him Whatever happens to me, if by following this course of action, the country and the Congress stand to benefit, no sacrifice is too great for me I have only to make you one request You have always treated me as your younger brother It is difficult for me to describe in words the affection and sense of respect I have developed for you during the course of my stay with you Hence don't dislodge me from the place I have secured in your heart and do not do me any injustice on the strength of rumours

V

After his discussion with Munshi, Gandhiji issued the following statement

> Shri K M Munshi wrote to me the enclosed from Naini Tal to which I sent a reply in Gujarati of which the original and translation are herewith enclosed (both quoted above) In pursuance of the correspondence Shri K M Munshi came to me as soon as it was possible after his return to Bombay In the course of the discussion I discovered that whilst he accepted in the abstract the principle of Ahimsa with all its implications, he felt the greatest difficulty in acting upon it, the more so as with his intimate knowledge of Bombay he was sure that he could not carry the Hindus with him, much less the Muslims He knew that the numerous Hindus who were under his influence would look to him for guidance and would seek his advice He saw no way of convincing them that they could defend themselves through Ahimsa As a political weapon therefore of immediate use in the midst of the riots which looked more like a miniature civil war, he could not make any effective use of Ahimsa With him the question was not one of interpretation of Congress resolutions but of being truthful to himself and to the country In view therefore of the following resolution by the A I C C explaining the Wardha statement, I advised that the only dignified and brave course for him was to resign from the Congress and attain freedom of action unhampered by restrictions entailed by the Congress non-violence

> The AICC has considered the statement issued by the Working Committee from Wardha on June 21, 1940 and

confirmed it The A I C C is of opinion that as explained therein, while the Congress must continue to adhere strictly to the principle of non-violence in the struggle for independence, it is unable, in the present circumstances, to declare that the principle should be extended to free India's national defence

The A I C C desire to affirm that the Congress organisation should continue to be conducted on the principle of non-violence and all Congress Volunteers are bound by their pledge to remain non-violent in the discharge of their duty and no Congress Volunteers' organisation can be formed or maintained except on that basis Any other volunteers' organisation for the purpose of self-defence with which Congressmen are associated must likewise adhere to non-violence

I told him that there came a time in every Congressman's life when, being a Congressman dragged him down that was when there was conflict between thought and action For the spring of non-violent action was non-violent thought If the latter was absent, the former had subjectively little or no value Therefore it was good for him, the Congress and the country that he should resign and mould his action from moment to moment as he thought proper And by his action he would open the door for those Congressmen to resign whose practice could not accord with their thought The Congress was conceived to be a non-violent and truthful organisation in which there should be no place for those who could not honestly conform to these two conditions Strange as it might appear the practice of non-violence seemed more difficult than of truth For the fruits of untruth were more indetectible than those of violence

My advice appealed to Shri Munshi And he has decided to accept it He will go because he could not be disloyal to the Congress he has so long served.

And it does not at all follow that his resignation means that from being a meek and mild man he suddenly becomes a fierce man vowing vengeance on those whom he may consider to be opponents or that he becomes a communal anti-nationalist I have no doubt that for him every non-Hindu whose only home is India is as much Indian as a Hindu born and bred in India I congratulate him upon taking the step he will and I have every hope that his resignation from the Congress will enable him to utilise his faculties so as to make a decisive contribution towards the establishment of lasting peace in Bombay

Munshi accepted Gandhiji's advice and issued the following statement resigning from the Congress

I had the benefit of detailed discussion with Gandhiji and many friends on the present situation in the country After mature deliberation, I feel that the interests of the country demand that with my views on the question of self-defence I should not continue any longer to be a member of the Congress Any other course would neither be honourable for me nor fair to the country or the Congress

Gandhiji would not think of my offering satyagraha in the present uncertain and enfeebled condition of my health I could not think of working a Peace Brigade in Bombay, not having the requisite spiritual strength At the same time to pursue any work other than that of helping to arrest the progress of the blood feud that is going on before one's eyes is flying away from duty I feel that in the dark days which lie ahead of India I would be of no use to the country unless I pursued the path of duty in the light which God has been pleased to vouchsafe to me

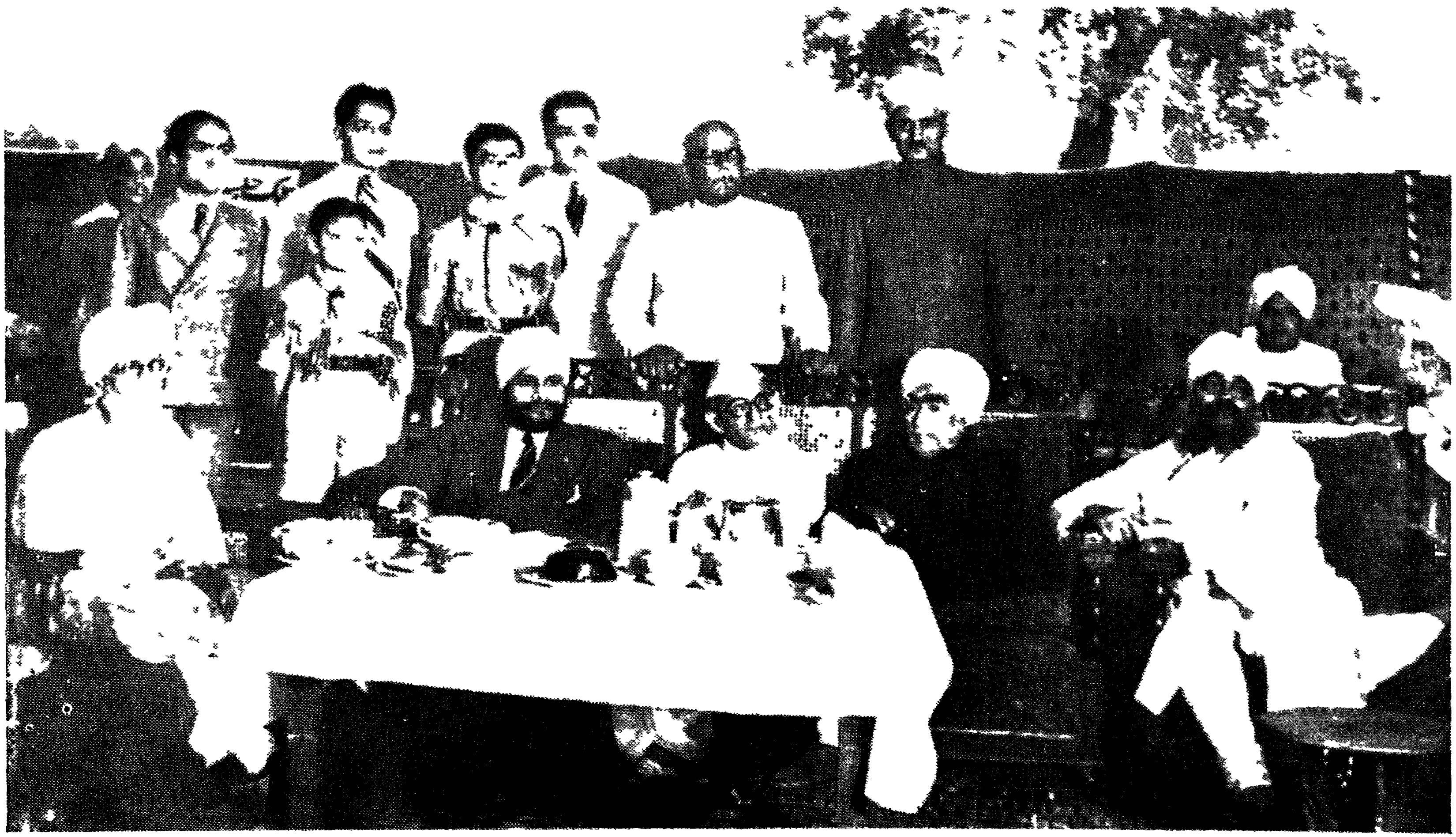
This decision has been rendered rather difficult

by the personal bond which subsists between Gandhiji and several leading Congressmen on the one hand and myself, but I would not be worthy of their confidence if I remained in the Congress with a mental reservation on the cardinal point of Congress faith as Gandhiji understands it My only satisfaction has been that Gandhiji, with his usual generosity, has helped me to reach a decision which is consistent with my own view as to the direction in which my immediate duty lies

VI

Munshi's resignation marked the beginning of the Akhand Hindustan campaign with which his name became closely associated as the author and chief protagonist He saw the threat to the country's integrity if the Muslim League was allowed to disrupt India's unity and if the communal riots went unchecked by organised self-defence 'India was one, is one and will remain one', he declared from a hundred platforms all over the country and sought to instil that faith in Akhand Hindustan into his countrymen which alone, he felt, could be the antidote to the 'ghost' of Disruption and to the fear of those who would shrink back from fighting it

If the cry of 'Akhand Hindustan' gave a new strength to the wavering and helped to solidify the opposition to the idea of vivisection of India, it was due principally to Munshi's practically single-handed campaign against the growing monster And yet that spirit of valiant self-defence was mistaken for aggressive communalism by several people Ali Bahadur Khan, a nationalist Muslim of Bombay, whose help too was sought by Munshi



Munshi at a party given in his honour at Lahore during the campaign for 'Akhand Hindustan' On either side of him are Sardar Baldev Singh and Sir Chhoturam



in his move to organise an Akhand Hindustan Front, felt that Munshi's resignation from the Congress 'as judged in the light of argument given by you (Munshiji) is communal and not national' 'Your action has not weakened the Pakistan movement but has strengthened it This will increase the communal poison in society', he said In his reply Munshi reiterated his nationalist convictions and wondered whether an attempt to close up the ranks of all those who believed in preserving Indian unity could be called a crime?

Munshi's campaign now directed itself into inspiring the people with a new civic sense and for eradicating the timidity in the people which India's age-long political slavery had given them

> There is a general hunt after remedies for riots Many remedies are proposed, discussed, recommended But there is only one remedy, without it, others are of no avail It is the possession and exercise of the civic sense by the ordinary citizen

He preached the *Mantra* of the *Gita* 'The Yogi is higher that the Ascetic' Resistance was the essence of individual or corporate growth 'If one did not resist, one would become worse than a weed' He warned against appeasing the Disruptionists

> If anything will strengthen the Disruptionists, it will be the supineness and gullibility of those who stand for Akhand Hindustan The creed of Disruption has thriven on appeasement so far, and unless Indians put their foot down, the country will be cleft into bits before we know what is being done

In words reminiscent of the prophets he appealed to the people to shed the Fear Complex

> Others try to overawe us, for we are willing to be overawed Get rid of the fear complex I be-

seech you Build your cities on the Vesuvius Plant your feet firmly Let your head touch the sky For, India has a message for the weary war-ridden world India cannot die, for you will save it

To those who mistook his campaign as an attempt at canalising Hindu group consciousness into communal aggressiveness he explained that Akhand Hindustan was not a political question, nor a religious one

> The unity and integrity of India is a vital necessity for the existence of all communities in the country I oppose the vivisection of India because it negatives both the existence and the future of the Nation Akhand Hindustan is not a fiction It is a fact, woven out of racial, economic, and cultural unity of all Indians, strengthened by British rule and overwhelming popular strength; sanctified by tradition and faith

In its international aspect, he pointed out, it was a fight against the absurdity of national sovereignty for a minority community when even in the larger international field the idea was proving its dangerous potentialities

VII

After conducting the campaign for a few weeks, Munshi wrote to Gandhiji giving a resume of the reactions of the country Gandhiji had earlier written to Munshi and acquainted him with some of the criticisms levelled against him in respect of his speeches Munshi laid bare his heart to Gandhiji and answered his critics thus

> I have duly received your letter I have also received extracts from the letter of Shri Satish I am writing this, since you have desired me to do so

My present state of mind can best be described in the, words of Bhartruhari—मौनात् मूक प्रवचन पटुतर If I am inactive I am misunderstood as one who is solely after making money If I undertake any activity, I am asked why I am not doing the same in some other way If I refer to you as 'revered', then I am taken as your tool If I express my difference of opinion on the question of 'non-violent resistance', people insinuate that there must be some ulterior motive in my leaving the Congress on such a narrow difference of opinion Congress people believe I must observe all their restrictions and discipline, and at the same time, they do not hesitate to take every step to show that I do not belong to the Congress The Hindu Mahasabha people are evidently happy about my views on Pakistan, but when I say that this is my only difference of opinion with the Congress, they believe that I am trying to revert back to the fold Rabid Muslims believe you to be the root of all evil and as such they look upon me as a poisonous reptile Nationalist Muslims and other friends, who think in terms of compromise, believe that my separation from the Congress has been the direct cause of the birth of the idea of Pakistan

When I observed at Kanpur that 'it is due to Gandhiji that we are able to hold our heads aloft today before the world', one among the audience stood up and stated 'Gandhiji has been the enemy of the country We are not here to hear him praised' A Muslim youth of Lucknow stated 'We do not want to hear Mr Munshi He wants to keep the Muslims under the heels of Hindus' Both these persons walked out of the meeting in anger There are some

personal elements also involved in this Gilbertian situation

Among my closest and intimate friends now left are Vallabhbhai and Rameshwardasji When I met Vallabhbhai, he was at a loss to decide as to whether he should act in terms of his spontaneous affection for me or merely maintain an attitude of silent reproach, implying 'oh, fool, what have you done during the time I was just a little away from you?' Whenever Birlaji meets me, he behaves with a sort of pathetic concern, as if I were virtually dead Lilavati is at her wits' end, whether to protect me as a lioness would protect her cub or to feel concerned about my feeling since I have come out of the Congress and she has not

I am caught, as it were, in a vortex—just a small feeble man of stunted stature—half ill and of weak eyes I felt a sense of security when I was under your kind shelter Now I feel like an orphan

But this time when I went to gaol, I had a realisation that I was moving away from what I conceived to be 'truth'—a complete identity of purpose in thought, word and action If I have to live perpetually under the fright of one or the other, I can hardly be myself When I fell ill, I decided that if I survived this illness, I must endeavour to search my true self Meanwhile, I was released unexpectedly There were riots in Dacca and Ahmedabad I had occasion to read your letter to Shri Bhogilal During the course of the last 11 years for the first time, I endeavoured to search my 'soul' and in the process, I have landed myself outside the Congress Since I speak out what I consider to be true, I find it very difficult to fit in with the strait-jacket of other

people's way of thinking This is just the beginning of my exile At least at this stage, I have courage enough to face both praise and calumny with a sense of equanimity I firmly believe that in whatever I am doing I am following the path of duty Perhaps, after sometime, I may lose this faith and strength There is no limit to my weakness Ultimately, I have to leave everything to God's will

You will now understand that the comments of Shri Satish have not pained me in the least I will now deal with the points raised by him

I had naturally to talk on several occasions during my tour, and it has been extremely difficult to keep a record or to remember what I said on a given occasion But I can assure you that at no stage have I stated or even indirectly hinted that my tour was inspired by you The real object of my tour was to cultivate those friends with whom I had corresponded and to know them better, as also to understand the state of mind of the people in general, and after all, those friends were all non-Congress men What earthly purpose would be served if I were to tell them that I have undertaken this tour at your instance!

Yes, when many of them told me that I should have raised this revolt within the Congress, I had to tell them clearly 'I had joined the Congress because of my attraction for Gandhiji and when a difference of opinion has developed and he has advised that it is proper for me to go out of the Congress I have done accordingly'

It is true that my speeches have offended the feelings of some of the Muslims Their feelings are one-sided and unduly sensitive They can do any-

thing or speak anything, and no one can say even real truth about them This is a form of blackmail which Hitler had developed in its deadliest form Why don't these sensitive Muslim friends make an effort to explain the insolence exhibited and the poison emitted by the Muslim leaders at a public meeting a few days back? And just because our friends experience a feeling of shock on hearing a Hindu saying something against the destructive attitude of the Muslims, should we remain silent?

Since the time the Muslim papers here have started making allegations against you, that you have sent me out of the prison to destroy the Muslims, I have been working very cautiously In spite of that, the belief persists and those who uphold the view maintain that Gandhiji is not so simple as to allow Munshi to leave the Congress and Munshi is not so naive as to leave the Congress for a very minor difference of opinion There must be some hidden meaning behind it Quite a few are unable to appreciate as to why, instead of making allegations like either Khare or Nariman, I still go on admiring you Why should I still continue to say that Satyagraha is a great weapon for uplifting the individual? Why did I not start my revolt within the Congress? If I have no intention to leave the Congress, why did I at the same time do so with your advice? Why do I still go on saying that, having regard to the existing position of the Congress, there can be no better policy than the one adopted by the Congress? Why do I not become a member of the Hindu Mahasabha?

All these questions are often hurled at me and I have to answer them, and in the result, where there is lack of what Gita calls unbiassed objective perception,

it is presumed that there is some conspiracy between us two I am but a small particle hovering in the firmament and you are directing the entire planetary system If by any act or speech I can remove this impression, I am willing to do whatever I am told Whatever be my personal opinion, I consider it my first duty to see that anything that I do does not affect your prestige and dignity in the least

Coming to the last issue, I have said something to this effect 'If needs be, we shall take the helping hand of a friendly power We shall stand before the bar of the world—to ask for help, to avoid a catastrophe, which would destroy the lives of 400 million people ' I fail to understand what is wrong about this view, But I can very well understand that to some it may not be palatable You are a 'tremendous phenomenon ' Those who have the privilege to be under your sheltering care nurse a sort of illusion that their strength, capacity and love for freedom are limitless The real fact is that in spite of your instilling in us new vitality and strength, we are yet weak and delight nearly in verbal gestures At best, we go to jail and even when we have the hope that within a couple of months you will get us released, we have not proved our capacity to hold power in the provinces Howsoever fondly we may cling to the belief that we can hold India as a nation and maintain its unity single-handed, it is difficult to sustain the belief in the same

I definitely hold that India cannot do without the assistance of other countries Hence, when I joined the Congress, I had made the same clear to you in my letter Since then I have reiterated on various occasions my view

> I am not one of those who have been, as it were, possessed by the idea of 'complete independence'. From a realistic point of view, I have always felt that it was difficult to attain Not only that, but I have considered it dangerous to instil this idea in a people who are weak There is no shame in enlisting the support of another power—may be it is British to-day or some other Power tomorrow—for preserving the nation's unity What is China doing to-day? Is she not taking Russia's assistance? Does not England require similar assistance from others? The real tragedy does not lie in taking such assistance but in the fond belief that we can do without it
>
> The letter has become unduly long and I would like to be excused for having taken much of your time I have written this in the hope that you must be receiving many such letters It is quite likely that my point of view may be wrong In that case I have never felt ashamed to acknowledge my mistake when discovered But to-day, my views are based on the experience, study and realisation of our weaknesses and the indelible imprint of the same in my heart

Having attempted as best he could to keep the nation strong against the rising danger from within and disappointed in his efforts to effect a *rapprochement* between Indian Nationalism and Britain in his own humble sphere, Munshi could not see any advantage in the suggestions mooted in October 1941 that Congress Ministries should return to office The late S Satyamurti, for instance, strongly advocated such a return to office which they had vacated at the nation's bidding Though Munshi considered the 1939 resignation 'an unfortunate piece of barren statesmanship', he could not countenance any futile

move of co-operating with those who flouted such co-operation in 1941 Section 93 Rule, the veto granted by L S. Amery to the Disruptionists, the filling of the Executive Council with anti-national elements were symptoms of an attitude of deliberately closing of the door of co-operation to Nationalists Neither honour nor expediency pointed the way to a return to such servile co-operation in war effort To Munshi, office held no glamour when it held out no prospect of real service to the nation's progress

VIII

The war meanwhile had changed its complexion With the Germans knocking at the gates of Moscow and the Far Eastern situation getting critical, Munshi said 'The war is no longer a struggle for racial or political domination but a world cataclysm which will alter the course of history' He therefore pleaded that Britain should win back India to willing co-operation and India should review its politics in the light of the new conditions Very soon with Japan's entry into the war and her capture of Rangoon, India was actually in the war 'This is no longer a war of 'imperialism' It has become the war of freedom and of Indian integrity', he pleaded and decried Britain's slowness in moving to win India even when Indian soil was going to be the scene of battle

The recognition of the changing nature of the war was reflected also in the Working Committee's resolution of January 1942 offering association in war effort if India were guaranteed independence Munshi supported that resolution and looked forward to prompt steps to 'set up a plenary government of power and strength in the

Centre' and 'converting the war into a successful crusade against totalitarianism' That resolution passed at Wardha was a vindication of Munshi's stand in regard to the limitations of non-violence It was clear that many Congressmen had begun to think like him that non-violence could not be accepted by ordinary men for all times, particularly when self-defence was involved

In January 1942, suggestions were already afloat—there was no mistaking its Disruptionist source—that a scheme of fifty-fifty representation to Muslims on the one hand and Hindus and others on the other in the Centre might be accepted by the Muslim League Munshi described it a 'sinister scheme' which could only be contenanced by men of loose thinking The increasing audacity of the Muslim League, raised to giddiest heights by Britain's panicky Congressphobia, only increased his awareness of the double danger to India's integrity, from within and without

When the Cripps Mission was announced in March, Munshi welcomed it heartily, not merely because of his confidence in Sir Stafford Cripps, for whom, he said, democracy was no imperialist slogan but a living faith His friendliness and concern for India were readily recognised by Munshi, unlike those who were only too ready to denounce him in advance as just another agent of Churchill Sir Stafford's personal sincerity and the international conditions which actuated the Cripps' offer were enough grounds for Munshi to plead

> If Sir Stafford's is an honest and bona fide attempt at friendship, it must not be allowed to fail The offer may be little What we want may be very much more But the spirit of camaraderie forged by the new friendship, *if achieved,* will adjust constitutional properties under happier auspices

When the offer was known, Munshi was quick to recognise its defects He described it as 'illogical in the extreme' But he admitted its *bona fides* and urged

> We want both integrity and freedom If the choice has to be made,—I hope the nation won't be put to it—the way before it is clear It should choose integrity to freedom, waiting for a better chance of attaining both For, without integrity for India there is no freedom

When at last the Mission failed, he called it 'a first class catastrophe for the cause of democracy all the world over' That catastrophe and the resultant frustration led some like Rajaji into supporting the claim of the Muslim League for Pakistan Even at the time of the Cripps offer, Munshi could understand Rajaji, the realist, getting embittered by the unending period of negation which the Congress policy involved When the A I C C by an overwhelming majority threw out the Rajaji resolution and passed Jagat Narain Lal's resolution formally asserting the integrity of the country, none was gladder than the protagonist of Akhand Hindustan The country was in no mood to hear of the counsel for vivisection

Settlement at any price, and a 'national' government at the Centre were now fast becoming a fetish with some sections of opinion Munshi consistently argued that the preservation of national integrity was more important than the fiction of a national government which was then impossible except on the basis of a virtual surrender to the disruptionist claims of the Muslim League

In the Quit India resolution and the 'bureaucratic blitzkrieg' against the movement, Munshi found an unnecessary conflict forced on India by British intransigence And he warned

> Indians can be easily repressed, they cannot be

turned into friends by coercion A policy of repression is highly dangerous to the United Kingdom as also to India

As one of the few leaders free to organise public opinion outside the Congress in favour of the national cause, Munshi did invaluable service He went about from one corner of the country to another to defend Congressmen from the tentacles of bureaucratic tyranny

When again Gandhiji went on fast and the nation was waiting with bated breath for some act of divine intervention that would save the Mahatma once again for the nation, Munshi was one of those who organised the Leaders' Conference to demand the release of Gandhiji They voiced the nation's demand, which could take an articulate form only through an assembly of all the leading public men of India outside the jails It cannot be denied that the Conference, which was attended by practically the leaders of all parties and communities, focussed world attention to the callousness to which the Linlithgow regime had descended under Amery's direction, and rallied the whole nation in support of Gandhiji's stand

In March 1945, Dr Khan Saheb, leader of the Congress Party in the N W F Province accepted the premiership, with the consent of Gandhiji This return to office for the first time after 1939, and the emphatic declaration of Gandhiji that mass civil disobedience had been given up, pointed to resuming the thread of co-operation snapped in November 1939 Munshi saw in it a gleam of hope that the country was at last coming out of the woods and reiterated his firm conviction that the surest way to improve the Indo-British relations was to implement the Act of 1935 to its full implications during the war, leaving its modifications to the post-war period He considered that the release of the Working Committee members, the resto-

iation of provincial ministries and the inauguration of the Federal part of the Act were the essential steps to be taken forthwith

When in April the Sapru Committee appointed by the non-party leaders published their recommendations, Munshi whole-heartedly supported the proposals for the restoration of provincial autonomy and the fuller implementation of the 1935 Act

IX

With the defeat of Germany in 1945, the world situation crystallised into a new shape Munshi saw the growing conflict between Russian and British spheres of influence, and pleaded for a new British Commonwealth including India, Burma and Ceylon He saw in Indian and other Asian nationalisms the real force which stood between the masses of Asia and Communism and felt that the emergence of such a British Commonwealth of Nations could alone prevent the rising power of Russia as well as another world conflict

The Wavell Offer too was welcomed by Munshi as another chance to cement the relations between India and Britain whose lot had been cast together by history But when the Simla Conference, held on the basis of the Wavell Plan failed, Munshi realised that in spite of the failure Nationalism gained a fresh triumph and the British Government was at last being forced to come down from the fence

The Labour victory at the British general elections encouraged Munshi to hope that the Labour Party with its avowed sympathy for Indian aspirations, faced as it was with the choice of wooing India into comradeship or

throwing her into the arms of the anti-British world, would bring about a revolutionary change in Indo-British relations

The Congress was slowly returning to constitutional activities and power, and naturally many eyes turned to Munshi the ex-Home Minister But he knew his limitations His resignation from the Congress had been misunderstood and ambitious rivals had created a wall of prejudice against him His advocacy of Akhand Hindustan was now brought into service to represent that he was not a nationalist

But two men knew him well, Gandhiji and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel They were waiting for an opportunity to utilise his services in the nation's cause But Munshi was firm 'I will not come into the Congress by the back door', one of the diary notes of his conversation records 'I will come back only if I can do so as honourably as I went out The world does not know that *Bapu* asked me to go out of the Congress I will not come back for the elections, if I do so, my usefulness to the country will suffer '

On one thing, however, he was firm He did not want to go back to the provincial field He was pressed to rejoin the Congress in order to defeat the prejudice created against him He had, however, made up his mind Unless Gandhiji's advice was forthcoming, he would not join

In October 1945 the leaders of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee wanted him to be nominated for the Central Assembly from Bombay At night Sardar Patel's message came that he should apply for being nominated 'I walked about in the compound for some time I tried to conquer *raga* and *dwesha* I surrendered myself to God The reply came—I should not rejoin unless Gandhiji ap-

proves', reads his diary for the 22nd October 1945. He then sent the following telegram to Sardar Patel

> Your kind letter Noted advice Patil just telephoned he and Bombay friends very keen I should stand for Assembly and have consulted you When I left Congress under Bapu's advice I had taken it as God's will I will again take it God's will that I should resume my services inside the Congress if *Bapu* sends approval of my proposed step with Patil or by wire

In one of his Gujarati letters to Sardar Patel, Munshi wrote:

> I read your affectionate letter with care I know how great is the confidence Bapu and you place in me, and also the goodwill which both of you bear towards me I am bound to you for ever
>
> I accepted Bapu's advice and left the Congress I thought it was God's will I was therefore in no hurry to return to the Congress and am not in a hurry now I can only be useful to the Congress if I return to it as honourably as I went out
>
> In 1928 when I came close to you in the Bardoli affair I broke all my old political contacts though they were highly beneficial I delighted in breaking them When in 1930, after the Dandi March, I joined the Congress, it was to go to jail in search of my ideals Whatever I did thereafter, you fully know I did all I could for the cause even after I parted from the Congress I felt that God was putting me on trial, and I submitted Even when out of the Congress, I am now doing all I can for it and will continue to do so
>
> But I do not think my usefulness to the Congress will increase by my being a four anna member On

> the contrary I smell *raga* in the step, as if I am a suppliant for some benefit from the Congress I will do for the country all I can I shall serve the Congress as best as I can And so long as you two are there, I can have no joy higher than being worthy of your confidence But I am not convinced that the Congress will be benefited by my rejoining it I am, therefore, not sure whether it is my *dharma* to rejoin it Nothing is lost by a little delay We shall settle the matter in consultation, you Bapu and me"

These were the days of spiritual doubts for Munshi His diary again and again seeks mandate from above

By the beginning of 1946 the situation in the country had undergone a vast change The victory of the Labour Party and the utterances of its leaders left no doubt that Labour intended to implement its pledges to India The transfer of power could no longer be delayed In the delicate and difficult negotiations ahead, the services of Munshi were imperatively necessary The issue on which Munshi had left the Congress was no longer alive, and he had no differences with the policy of the Congress Many friends requested him to rejoin the national organisation which he did after writing the following letter to Gandhiji making his position clear

> In October last, friends from the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee had recommended me as a candidate for the Central Assembly and Sardar Vallabhbhai had accepted the recommendation subject to your approval At the time you were good enough to advise me not to stand as it was not in my interest Now many friends have pointed out to me that at this critical time it is my duty at least to resume my membership of the Congress as a four-anna member
>
> I left the Congress in 1941 under your advice

My views rendered it necessary. To quote your words, I could not be disloyal to the Congress which I had so long served. Since then I have tried to serve the Congress and the country from outside to the best of my ability. And nothing has been more gratifying than that during these years I have had the good fortune to retain both your confidence and interest in me.

The coming months will see a trial of strength for the Nation. And I have no differences left with the present policy of the Congress.

I have, therefore, thought over the conversation we had last night and I have decided to accept your advice to resume my membership of the Congress.

Soon after, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru appointed Munshi on the Experts Committee of the Congress for doing the spade work in connection with the Constituent Assembly. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly he was elected from Bombay. The lone trail was over and he was back again in the counsels of the Congress.

CHAPTER VII

THE HYDERABAD INTERLUDE

I

The Mountbatten Plan, while partitioning the country and transferring power to two Dominions on 15th August, 1947, did not solve the problem of the princely states which occupied over half a million square miles Under the June 3rd Plan, the paramountcy of the British Crown over the States would be withdrawn and the States would be free to accede either to India or to Pakistan, or to come to particular political arrangements with them This was almost a constitutional invitation to the five hundred odd States to assert their independence Prophets of gloom were not wanting who predicted that the ship of Indian freedom would founder on the rocks of princely intransigence

Before the actual transfer of power, Lord Mountbatten held a series of conferences with the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League As a result, a new department called the States Department (to distinguish it from the old Political Department) was set up with Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as Minister in charge for India and Abdur Rab Nishtar as his counterpart in Pakistan to deal with the problem of the States Sardar's first act was to appeal to the rulers of all States within or contiguous to India to accede to the Dominion of India on Defence, External Affairs and Communications, without any other commitments, financial or otherwise With the co-operation of Lord Mountbatten, the active assistance of V P Menon who became the Secretary of the States Ministry, Sardar was able to prevail upon the large majority

of the Indian rulers, and by 15th August 1947 all the States, within or contiguous to India, had acceded to the Dominion of India There were three exceptions—Junagadh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Hyderabad

Hyderabad, with its area of 82,689 square miles, was the largest state in India The population was 85 per cent Hindu and 15 per cent Muslim, but the Civil Service, Police and Military were virtually the close preserve of this 15 per cent minority The Nizam, Mir Osman Ali Khan, had, ever since the question of Indian freedom entered the realm of reality, been dreaming of independence He had tried hard for this position being conceded by His Majesty's Government But his requests had been turned down Shortly after the announcement of the Mountbatten Plan, he issued a firman stating that he would not send representatives to the Constituent Assembly of either India or Pakistan and that he would assume the status of an independent sovereign after 15th August 1947 It may be mentioned here that none of his ancestors had ever enjoyed independence in the earlier years they were subservient to the Moghul Emperor, in later years they were no more than the vassals of the British

Hyderabad's refusal to accede to the Indian Dominion was viewed with dismay throughout the country The geographical position of the State was such that it could cut across the integrity of India Moreover at this time a fanatical communal organisation was dominating the Hyderabad Government and terrorising the Hindu population This was the Ittehad-ul-Muslimeen, a replica of the All-India Muslim League with an even more aggressive communal bias The President of the Ittehad was one Kasim Razvi an obscure lawyer with a fanatical hatred of Hindus He had built up a group of storm-troopers call-

ed the Razakars and they had, in the confusion following the conclusion of the Second World War and the transfer of power, managed to obtain a large quantity of arms and ammunition.

The Indian Cabinet and Lord Mountbatten were anxious that the Hyderabad problem should be settled peacefully. The Nizam had as his constitutional adviser, Sir Walter Monckton, an eminent King's Counsel and an intimate friend of Lord Mountbatten. A series of negotiations took place into which it would be tedious to go into any detail. Ultimately when it was known that the Nizam would not accede to India under any circumstances and as a last step to save communal peace in South India, Sardar and the Indian Cabinet agreed to sign a Standstill Agreement with Hyderabad. It may be mentioned that Sardar had refused to sign a Standstill Agreement with any State unless the ruler acceded to the Dominion of India. An exception was made in the case of Hyderabad. This Standstill Agreement which would be in force for a period of one year would continue all the existing arrangements (other than Paramountcy) between India and Hyderabad until new arrangements were made. One of the clauses of the Agreement stipulated that each Government should send an Agent-General to the other.

Even this Agreement was not signed in the normal course and without a touch of melodrama. The Hyderabad delegation, headed by Sir Walter Monckton, had to resign after unruly demonstrations by Razakars. A new delegation consisting of Razvi's nominees was appointed and, though it had to accept the Agreement as finalised by Sir Walter Monckton's team, Razvi could announce that the Agreement had been signed by a purely Hyderabadi delegation.

At this time, the Nawab of Chhatari, who had been the Prime Minister of Hyderabad throughout the negotiations leading to the Standstill Agreement, resigned and the Nizam appointed in his stead Mir Laik Ali, a friend and supporter of Kasim Razvi A prominent member of the new Hyderabad Cabinet was Nawab Moin Nawaz Jung, brother-in-law of Laik Ali and an ardent follower of the Ittehad These three were the arbiters of Hyderabad's destinies during those fateful ten months culminating in the Police Action

II

The post of Agent-General in Hyderabad was offered to Munshi by Sardar Patel when he met him in the third week of December 1947 in the house of a common friend Munshi was completely taken by surprise and he replied that he would have to consult Gandhiji on the point He stipulated two conditions First that if at all he went, it would be as a member of the Constituent Assembly and secondly that he would accept no salary Sardar agreed to both conditions

The same evening Munshi met Gandhiji The latter not only approved of Munshi's going over to Hyderabad but strongly urged him to go "It is not merely a commission, it is your *dharma*," said Gandhiji But Munshi protested, "The job is difficult " "I know", replied the Mahatma, "the job is difficult, but you will not fail If men like you hesitate to undertake this work, how are we to make any progress?" Gandhiji admitted that the Razvi group might not like Munshi, but that, he added, should make no difference He also approved of Munshi's decision not to take any salary

The next day Munshi left for Bombay still undecided about the offer But the day after he reached Bombay, Sardar's voice came to him over the phone from Delhi "When are you going to Hyderabad?" Munshi tried to explain that he had arrived in Bombay only the previous day and was still somewhat undecided Sardar, however, cut him short "You must go to Hyderabad without delay Why not come to Delhi tomorrow morning and settle everything?"

Munshi arrived in Delhi and found that Sardar was determined to send him to Hyderabad The appointment was announced on 25th December It was tentatively decided that Munshi should reach Hyderabad by the 5th January, though all arrangements were more or less completely nebulous In fact when he asked for his staff, the Secretary of the State Ministry, V P Menon told Munshi that the Government of India could not spare more than one officer and that Munshi would have to find out the rest for himself Munshi, however, was able to gather around him the nucleus of his staff

Munshi's appointment was widely welcomed in the country Lord Mountbatten congratulated him, remarking that the job was for a front-rank politician Before leaving for Bombay, Munshi saw Gandhiji again who said, "I want you to promise me that you will exercise your utmost skill in order to bring about a settlement" Munshi promised but asked as to whether the negotiations should last interminably Gandhiji laughed and replied, "Shall we say for three or four months?" Munshi persisted "And if they fail, what then?" "There would be no alternative but to bring things to an end," was Gandhiji's cryptic reply

Munshi had no illusions about the delicate and difficult task that lay ahead of him in Hyderabad In fact

when friends gathered to congratulate him at Bombay, he said, "Do not give me your congratulations I want your prayers".

Munshi's forebodings were justified for trouble had started even before he reached Hyderabad. Some members of his staff, who had gone in advance, found that no arrangement had been made by the Nizam's Government to provide accommodation to India's Agent-General So the staff went and occupied the Bolarum Residency The Nizam demanded that the Residency should be vacated immediately and messages began to fly between Delhi and Hyderabad. The Nizam was adamant that the Agent-General should not stay in the Residency for even a day and proposed that he should stay as a temporary guest of Laik Ali, who had become the Nizam's Prime Minister Ultimately it was agreed that the Agent-General should occupy the Residency for about ten days and then shift to the Deccan House which was the residence of the General commanding the Indian Army in Hyderabad As the General was still occupying the Deccan House, it was not possible to install the Agent-General there immediately on his arrival Munshi renamed the Deccan House as *Dakshina Sadan*

The trouble about residence did not end here Munshi was now offered for his town residence one of the two houses, Greenland and Rockland, situated within the city proper Munshi inspected the two buildings and selected Rockland to which Laik Ali agreed It was now the turn of the Nizam to raise objections Every Friday on his way to the mosque he would have to pass by Rockland and the possibility of his 'exalted' eyes resting even for a fleeting moment on the Indian tricolour was unthinkable! Laik Ali now asked Munshi, after due apologies, to select another house But Munshi refused on the very cogent

ground that the Nizam's Government had first offered the building and then accepted his choice However, differences on this point were never fully resolved till every building in Hyderabad was displaying the Indian tricolour

As soon as Munshi's appointment was announced, the Nizam proposed that the Agents-General should concern themselves only with matters relating to trade and commerce But the Government of India pointed out the relevant section of the Standstill Agreement in which it was stipulated that the appointments were intended for the better execution of the Agreement and that the Agents-General were entitled to every facility for the proper discharge of their duties

The Government of Hyderabad then raised the question of the ceremonials to be observed on the occasion of the assumption of charge by the Agents-General It was clear that their purpose was to regard the Government of India as an equal and to treat the exchange of Agents-General in the same way as the exchange of Ambassadors between two independent countries The Government of India prevented this

Munshi had instructed his officers to invite the leading citizens of Hyderabad to an 'At Home' on 5th January, 1948, the day of his arrival in Hyderabad and to arrange a dinner party the same night for Laik Ali and his colleagues Immediately on his arrival at Hyderabad, Munshi was requested by Laik Ali to cancel both the functions As the invitations had already been issued, it was not possible to oblige Laik Ali Ultimately it was arranged that both the functions would be held at the Bolarum Residency, the temporary residence of Munshi The dinner which Munshi was to have given to the members of the Hyderabad Cabinet was to be treated as Laik Ali's

welcome dinner to Munshi This incident by itself is insignificant, but it shows alike the capacity of Laik Ali to take affront at the slightest provocation and his eagerness to see that the independence of Hyderabad should not be jeopardised even by implication

The task that confronted Munshi was both delicate and difficult It was his job to see that the Standstill Agreement was implemented by the Government of Hyderabad He had also to see if by personal contact and discussion he could persuade the Nizam and his Advisers either to accede to the Indian Union or to introduce responsible government in the State He was expected to bring a ray of hope to the non-Razakar elements, particularly the Hindus and that section of the Muslims which did not follow the lead of the Ittehad He had to keep the Government of India posted with full information about the activities of the Government of Hyderabad, as well as of the Razakars so that any attempt to build up the military strength of the State might be thwarted in time He had also to keep the Government of India informed about the political conditions in the State No wonder, therefore, that one newspaper called him the advance guard of the Indian Army in Hyderabad and a brilliant columnist went to the extent of saying that 'Munshi has been chosen to be the Trojan Horse in the seige of Hyderabad'

III

That the task ahead of him was no bed of roses was brought home to Munshi no sooner than he had set foot in the State The trinity which was ruling the destinies of Hyderabad at the time, Mir Laik Ali, Nawab Moin Nawaz Jung and Kasim Razvi, made no secret of their

hostility to Munshi The Ittehad press was uniformly hostile to him A few days after his arrival, Munshi at a public reception compared the Nizam to Akbar in the hope that the comparison would be flattering The Ittehad press was furious because the Nizam, who was supposed to be the head of an Islamic State, had been compared to Akbar who, according to them, was not a true Muslim Again, at his first press conference, Munshi had avowed that he had come to win the heart of the Nizam if the latter allowed him to do so This statement was seized upon by the Ittehad press who asked, 'who is Munshi to talk of winning the heart of the Ala Hazrat?' Ala Hazrat was how the Ittehad press referred to the Nizam

The hostility of the Ittehad press was not the only obstacle confronting Munshi Whenever he came out of his house, he was either preceded or followed by the Razakars singing *'Nizam ke kadmon pe Nehru ko jhuka denge, Patel-Munshi ko kabron me gad denge* ('We shall force Nehru to bow low at the feet of the Nizam, we shall bury Patel and Munshi in their graves') Young Razakars selling newspapers at street corners would shout whenever they saw Munshi's car with the Indian tricolour 'Latest news, Sardar Patel dead One anna' It was really a war of nerves against India's Agent-General

The Laik Ali Government also decided to isolate Munshi V P Menon in his 'Story of the Integration of Indian States' refers to this and says

> While the relations of the Government of India with the Nizam's Agent-General in Delhi (Nawab Zain Yâr Jung) were cordial, Munshi was treated with definite hostility by the Government of Hyderabad and his relations with them were extremely strained Because of the suspicion with which he was viewed by

the Government of Hyderabad, he was virtually a prisoner in his own house

The only persons with whom Munshi was allowed to keep contact were Laik Ali and Moin Nawaz Jung As an example of the extent to which the Nizam's Government was determined to isolate him may be cited the case of Col Wagrey, one of the leading medical practitioners of the State Munshi was keeping indifferent health and Col Wagrey used to come and treat him Soon they became good friends This came to the ears of the Hyderabad Government and Wagrey was dismissed from service and he left Hyderabad Soon after, Munshi tried to get an able physician of Hyderabad but, despite several phone calls, the physician refused to call on Munshi, evidently he thought discretion the better part of valour Munshi was then looked after by Dr M G Naidu, (the husband of Mrs Sarojini Naidu) who had, due to old age, given up medical practice several years previously

There were quite a few Muslim leaders in Hyderabad, including members of the Nizam's entourage, who had faith in Munshi but none of them dared to meet him Nawab Manzoor Jung used to visit Munshi frequently and to introduce his friends to him The Nizam, no doubt under pressure from Laik Ali and the Razakars, discouraged Manzoor Jung from visiting King Kothi, the Nizam's palace Shoebullah Khan, Editor of *Imroze*, a friend of Manzoor Jung, was murdered by the Razakars for his trenchant criticism of their activities

Nawab Hosh Yar Jung, a courtier and great favourite of the Nizam, used to visit Munshi surreptitiously, sometimes at midnight and incognito Hosh Yar Jung was a man with vision who wanted to save Hyderabad from difficulties Once he asked Munshi whether he would accept an invitation to dinner with the Nizam Munshi

agreed and Hosh Yar Jung suggested to His Exalted Highness that Munshi might be invited Hosh had accounted without Laik Ali, who immediately protested, "Munshi is a dangerous man, it is no use meeting him" Hosh, as a finished courtier, immediately retorted "Does Ala Hazrat realise what the Nawab Sahib is insinuating? He means to say Ala Hazrat is so weak and lacking in intelligence that if he were to talk to Munshi even on a ceremonial occasion, he would immediately lose his senses and do what Munshi tells him to do What a tribute to Ala Hazrat!" But Laik Ali was able to turn the tables against Hosh Yar Jung and the invitation was never sent

In fact Munshi paid the Nizam his first official and formal visit on assuming charge as Agent-General and could never meet him again until the afternoon of 17th September, the day before the Indian Army entered the city—the same evening the nervous voice of the Nizam came over the radio and referred to 'my friend Mr Munshi'

It was in this atmosphere that Munshi had to carry on his mission While the negotiations were going on in Delhi for the conclusion of the Standstill Agreement, the Government of Hyderabad had sent El Edroos, the Commander-in-Chief of the State Forces, to purchase arms and ammunition from Czechoslavakia The States Ministry had come to know about this and Lord Mountbatten had pointed out the impropriety of the Hyderabad Government purchasing arms from a foreign power The Nawab of Chhatari, then Prime Minister of Hyderabad, had promised to cancel the order, but Munshi found on his arrival that the order had not been cancelled

Another piece of information which Munshi found out was really staggering Ghulam Mohammad was then the Finance Minister of Pakistan and Laik Ali was at one time

his protege The Government of Hyderabad had transferred Rs 20 crores worth of Government of India securities as a loan to the Government of Pakistan.

The Standstill Agreement had stipulated the withdrawal of Indian troops from the Hyderabad State and the Nizam's Government had been insisting on the speedy implementation of this withdrawal Munshi brought to the notice of the Government of India that there were large quantities of army stores lying in Hyderabad which were guarded only by chaukidars The Government of India accepted Munshi's proposal and issued orders that the withdrawal of stores and the withdrawal of the remainder of the army from Hyderabad should be co-ordinated in such a way as to have no stores behind without adequate protection

IV

Even before his arrival at Hyderabad, Munshi had heard about the atrocities of the Razakars who were terrorising not only the Hindu population but even those Muslims who did not toe their line He was determined to find out the actual facts and report them to the Government of India With the permission of Laik Ali and accompanied by a high Police official, he set out on a tour of the State His tour had been announced in the papers and Hindu leaders from all over the State had invited him to visit their particular towns and villages and Munshi agreed He was, therefore, surprised when, during a trip covering about 200 miles, he did not come across a single Hindu Only at one place did the Nizam's Police produce a trembling Hindu who complained of Razakar activities Munshi, however, found out the reason for this strange boy-

cott when he saw an advance party of Razakars preceding him After his return to Secunderabad, several Hindu leaders came and told him that the people had been sternly warned by the Razakars that, if they were to be found anywhere near the route by which Munshi was passing, they would receive short shrift

Baulked in his personal search for collecting authentic news, Munshi had to build up a machinery for gathering information He pressed into service some of the journalists in Hyderabad, notably the representatives of the Associated Press of India and the United Press of India, as well as the local correspondent of the *Hindu* Some of the leaders of the Arya Samaj and of the State Congress like Ramachari and B Ramakrishna Rao were of great help to Munshi in this task Whenever he received a report on any atrocities committed by the Razakars, he would get the facts verified by one or the other of these personal friends At his suggestion, the Pleaders' Protest Committee of Hyderabad formed a vigilant sub-committee which was entrusted with the task of collecting authentic and first hand information about the misdeeds of the Razakars

Munshi had a series of discussions with Laik Ali and Nawab Moin Nawaz Jung with a view to impressing on them the imperative necessity of curbing the lawless activities of the Razakars Both of them insisted that the reports of the atrocities were highly exaggerated or completely imaginary They advanced the strange plea that the Ittehad had precipitated itself into being because of the apprehension of the Muslims in Hyderabad that their lives were in danger The Razakars were patriotic people who went to the rescue of harmless Muslims and they were harassed by the Communists! It was quite clear that the Laik Ali cabinet either would not, or could not, take any action against the Razakars Continuous discussions were

also held to explore the possibilities of carrying out the provisions of the Standstill Agreement As V P Menon puts it in his 'Story of the Integration of Indian States', nothing came out of these discussions in the course of which, however, it became apparent that Laik Ali's aim was not the fulfilment of the Agreement, but the enlargement of its scope

In fact, hardly had the ink on the Standstill Agreement been dried before the Nizam's Government issued two ordinances in quick succession The first imposed restrictions on the export of all precious metal from Hyderabad to India The second declared Indian currency to be not legal tender in the State The Government of India protested that these two ordinances were violations of the Standstill Agreement But the Hyderabad Government took up an intransigent attitude

It was against this background that Munshi went to Delhi in the last week of January, 1948 Laik Ali and Moin Nawaz Jung also went to Delhi at the same time and had a talk with Sardar and V P Menon

The discussions could not be continued because of Gandhiji's assassination on the evening of the 30th January Laik Ali and Moin Nawaz Jung subsequently returned to Hyderabad Munshi had some lengthy discussions with Sardar, who indicated to him the line that was to be adopted Since the Nizam's Government had failed to observe the terms of the Standstill Agreement, it was no use discussing its implications Sardar asked Munshi to concentrate on negotiating a permanent settlement on the basis of the grant of responsible government in the State or of accession to the Indian Union

The visit to Delhi brought about no change in the situation in Hyderabad Razvi threw all restraint to the winds and indulged in most objectionable speeches

calculated to inflame passions both inside and outside the State He and his followers broke up a public meeting to be held in the Nizam's College ground to mourn the death of Gandhiji In one speech he charged the Government of India with supplying arms and ammunitions surreptitiously to the Hindus of Hyderabad In another he appealed for five lakhs of volunteers to be the liberators of the Muslims of India from the yoke of the Indian Union

Soon after Gandhiji's death, it had been decided at Delhi that his ashes should be distributed for ceremonial immersion in the different rivers of India at places held sacred Accordingly, a portion of the ashes was brought to Hyderabad for immersion in the *sangam,* the confluence of two rivers Despite the hostile attitude of the Laik Ali Ministry and the blandishment of the Razakars, the citizens of Hyderabad, both Hindus and Muslims, joined the procession and for the first time Hyderabad saw scenes of fraternization between Hindus and Muslims and heard shouts of '*Gandhiji-ki-jai*' and chants of Gandhiji's favourite hymn

The very same night Munshi continued his interminable discussions with Laik Ali As Munshi was coming out of the house at midnight, Laik Ali said "Munshi, you are always worrying yourself about Hyderabad Why don't you relax? Why don't you sometimes come to the Club?"

"I am not a club-going man," replied Munshi

"Are you not fond of bridge?"

"I set myself against learning to play bridge years ago, I have no time for it"

Laik Ali's eyes were a humorous twinkle as he asked: "Don't you like the company of women?"

"Women! Oh yes But one is as much as I can manage in one life"

Laik Ali was taken aback, but with a smile he said "I would like to throw you out of this window"

But Munshi had the last word "If you want to do that, do it now This is the only occasion when the hundred thousand people who followed Gandhiji's ashes to the sangam are likely to follow my funeral "

V

Munshi started fresh negotiations with Laik Ali which lasted up to March Laik Ali agreed to Munshi's suggestion that they should shelve the discussion on the Standstill Agreement, and work out a formula for a permanent settlement However, Laik Ali's idea of settlement, if accepted, would have meant the virtual independence of Hyderabad He refused to cede to the Union any control over the Hyderabad army He insisted that Hyderabad must be free to pass its own laws with regard to citizenship, naturalisation and aliens Hyderabad should also have the right to appoint agents in foreign countries, of trading freely and of making its own exchange regulations The State should also have the right to enter into independent international agreements As regards communication, Hyderabad must have complete and exclusive control over such all-India communications as passed through the State

Munshi told Laik Ali plainly that if he was determined on the stand he had put forward, it would be difficult to convince the Union Government that the Nizam's Government was in earnest about conceding Defence, External Affairs and Communications to the Centre Munshi also pressed upon Laik Ali again and again the urgent need of controlling the Razakars Laik Ali said that he would

only do so, if the Union Government came to a settlement, allowed Hyderabad to have 25,000 troops and 25,000 police, and immediately supplied the full military equipment needed for them, in other words, if the Union Government helped Laik Ali to convert the irregular Razakar brigands into regular troops.

As the negotiations proceeded towards a stalemate, the Nizam brought Sir Walter Monckton to Hyderabad. Munshi discussed the situation with Monckton, who was also present at subsequent negotiations. But no progress could be made for Laik Ali would not move an inch from his position: no accession, only alliance, no banning of the Razakar activities unless the Union came to satisfactory arrangement with Hyderabad, no constitutional changes in the State except on a basis of 50 : 50 ratio between Muslims and non-Muslims.

While these negotiations were proceeding, attempts were made by the Nizam's government to establish trade connections with Persia, Egypt, the United Kingdom, the U.S.A. and Canada. A large amount of sterling was placed at the disposal of the Agent of Hyderabad in the United Kingdom to meet any emergency. Plans were made to buy out the Tata Sons Ltd., who held certain shares in the Deccan Airways Ltd., the rest of the shares belonging to the Nizam's Government. The object was to acquire complete control over the Deccan Airways, and to link Hyderabad with Karachi in West Pakistan and Chittagong in East Pakistan. At the instance of Munshi, the Union Government granted licence to an Indian Airways company to operate in Hyderabad, and Moin Nawaz claimed that the territorial integrity of Hyderabad was being violated, though under the Standstill Agreement, Communications had been vested in the Union Government.

The vituperations of Razvi were getting worse Munshi was his *bete noire* and he fulminated 'The State Congress has been transferred to the Deccan House The Agent-General in Hyderabad does not represent the Union but is presiding over the State Congress What is this representative of India doing here? Wherever this gentleman sets his foot, there is destruction Hyderabad cannot put up with him for a moment '

Meanwhile, border raids by the Razakars on Madras, Bombay and the Central Provinces increased in ferocity and frequency, and Sardar Patel convened a conference of the Chief Ministers and the Home Ministers of those three provinces, besides the Secretaries of all the ministries concerned and Munshi It was decided to take prompt steps to stop the Razakars from raiding the Union territory, to prevent the smuggling of arms and ammunition and other war materials into Hyderabad and to arrest, as far as possible, any other anti-Indian activities of the Nizam's government which were obviously preparing for an armed conflict

On February, 28, after returning to Hyderabad, Munshi wrote to Laik Ali stressing the dangerous possibilities of the Razakar movement Munshi also offered to go round with Laik Ali through the state and border districts and co-operate with him in restoring law and order Needless to say Laik Ali neither accepted Munshi's offer, nor gave him any reply Instead he went with Moin Nawaz and Monckton to New Delhi and started negotiations with Lord Mountbatten Moin Nawaz and Laik Ali adroitly explained away most of the breaches of the Standstill Agreement, glibly made some promises for future good behaviour and denied that the Razakars had committed any atrocities They managed to create a good impression in certain quarters at New Delhi

Fortunately Sardar Patel was not taken in While Laik Ali and Moin Nawaz were negotiating with Mountbatten, Munshi also was at Delhi, and explained to Sardar Patel the real situation in Hyderabad Sardar told Munshi that a strong line of action would have to be pursued after the end of March, and asked Menon and Munshi to prepare a note pointing out the breaches of the Standstill Agreement committed by the Nizam's Government, and demanding the ban of the Razakars If Laik Ali failed to comply with this demand, the frontiers of Hyderabad were to be sealed off to prevent trouble spreading to the surrounding Union districts

Munshi also saw Lord Mountbatten on March 6 and spoke frankly about the situation in Hyderabad It seems, however, that he failed to impress Lord Mountbatten Campbell Johnson writes

> Mountbatten has seen K M Munshi, India's* Agent-General in Hyderabad, who is active, purposeful and, I should guess, ambitious He is moving up in the Congress hierarchy, although lacking the particular Congress badge of honour, prison service in resistance to the Raj This not unnaturally only enhances the vigour of his nationalism today In his memorial broadcast on the Mahatma he presented himself as the student of *ahimsa* or non-violence, who was ready to grapple with Gandhi on the failure of civil-disobedience in 1942 because it did not stand the scriptural test of *ahimsa*, as it evoked wrath in the enemy and not love From what he had to say to Mountbatten today, it is clear that he is not placing excessive reliance on *ahimsa* for dealing with Hydera-

* This was scarcely a true statement

bad If the activities of the Razakars are not quickly restrained, he advocates sending in the Indian police to do so, which by his own legal interpretation, he considers would come within the terms of the Standstill Agreement He is already convinced that the Razakars cannot and will not be restrained by the present regime

Mountbatten spoke firmly of India's need to adopt *ethical and correct behaviour* and to act in such a way as could be defended before the bar of world opinion In the present state of negotiations, Munshi's proposal for police action was absolutely wrong Mr Laik Ali must be given a fair chance to deal with the Razakars, to implement the Standstill Agreement and introduce a measure of responsible government

Mountbatten told me afterwards that while he has no doubt about Munshi's drive and ability, he is far from happy whether his temperament or political outlook fit him for this particularly delicate stage in the handling of the Nizam which calls for *unusual diplomatic patience and non-communal objectives* (italics ours)

This entry in Campbell-Johnson's diary is quite revealing

Sardar Patel unfortunately had a sudden heart attack on March 5, which prevented him from attending to work for some time Munshi and Menon therefore decided that they would wait a little longer before making the final of the Standstill Agreement Meanwhile Munshi was to make a final effort to press upon Laik Ali the immediate need of bringing the Razakars under control

VI

Munshi therefore began a fresh series of talks with Laik Ali and Moin Nawaz Jung He tried his atmost to persuade Laik Ali to take some decisive action against the Razakars, who had since joined hands with the communists They were raiding Hindu villages with the connivance if not the open help, of the Hyderabad police Munshi urged that, if the panic created by the Razakars were allayed, border areas would settle down, law and order would be restored and the strict watch kept by the Union police on the border areas relaxed Further negotiations would only succeed if this were done Laik Ali, however, refused to suppress the Razakars or the Communists unless his demands were fulfilled, which would have transformed the Razakars into a trained army with arms and ammunition supplied by the Union Government

A day or two after his last talks with Laik Ali, Munshi went to Delhi and reviewed the Hyderabad situation carefully with V P Menon on March 19 and 20 Munshi thereafter prepared the draft of a letter which was recast by Menon The breaches of the Standstill Agreement committed by the Nizam's Government were pointed out, and the Nizam's government was asked to fulfill its obligations by withdrawing the twenty-crore loan to the Pakistan Government, by agreeing to a joint commission to examine the agreements and arrangements relating to matters of defence, by furnishing a return of the strength, organisation and equipment of the police in the form in which it used to be done previous to August 15, 1947, by banning the organisation of the Razakars, by repealing the ordinance which made the use of Indian currency for cash transactions illegal in the state, by cancelling the ban on the export of gold, groundnuts and oil seeds; and by

cancelling the agreement if any, with United Press of America as regards the transmitting or receiving station for foreign news

With this letter (piquantly characterised by Lord Mountbatten's press attache as 'drafted originally by V. P, heated up by Patel and cooled down by Nehru'.) Munshi reached Hyderabad on March 26, and delivered it personally to Laik Ali the same day The immediate effect of this letter on Laik Ali was wholesome Laik Ali somehow had feeling that the letter did not represent the policy of the Government of India He, Moin Nawaz Jung and Razvi now took complete control of the government, making the Nizam almost a prisoner in his house Hyderabad was rapidly being converted into a military camp Recruits were being enlisted in large numbers in the army New barracks were being built A bren gun factory had been set up

The Razakars, now about one hundred thousand strong, were controlling the state, loot, murder, arson and rape continued Between April 1947, and March 1948 nearly 250 villages in the state had been looted or burnt, 4000 houses set on fire, 500 persons killed or wounded, 450 women molested

To allay suspicions at Delhi, Laik Ali sent an evasive reply to Pandit Nehru in which he denied the allegations of the Government of India and invoked the arbitration clause of the Standstill Agreement The Nizam also wrote to Lord Mountbatten that the letter carried by Munshi was in the nature of an ultimatum to be regarded as a prelude to an open breach of friendly relations' He warned that if the policy of the coercion hitherto pursued by India was continued, the peace not only of Hyderabad but of the whole of South India would be endangered

Along with his letter, the Nizam had sent to Mount-

batten the minutes of a talk between Munshi and Laik Ali as drawn up by the latter It may be noted that Nizam's letter and the minutes were taken to Delhi by Sir Walter Monckton The summary of the talk drawn up by Laik Ali was an extremely clever performance It did not report the conversation as it took place, but Munshi was shown delivering a harangue Most of it was a loose summary of what Munshi had said with a change of emphasis, but at places wild sentiments had been cleverly interpolated 'Ours is a Hindu India, Hyderabad is essentially Hindu territory and part of a Hindu State', Munshi was alleged to have thundered at Laik Ali

Lord Mountbatten sent this disturbing summary to Sardar Patel, who called Munshi to Delhi Luckily Munshi had sent his report of the conversation to Sardar Patel before Laik Ali's reached him Munshi convinced Sardar Patel of his innocence, but many persons in New Delhi continued to place faith in Laik Ali

In the meantime another event happened On March 31, during Hyderabad 'Weapons Week,' Razvi delivered a singularly fanatic speech in the course of which he declared 'I know the helplessness of our Muslim brothers in the Indian Union Let us by our example of unsurpassed heroism, courage and vision extend the much-needed succour to them They will be our 'Fifth columnists' in the Union ' Munshi sent a copy of this speech to Sardar Patel and it was also reported in the *Hindustan Times* and later in other Indian newspapers

Both Nehru and Mountbatten referred to this speech when they had a discussion with Sir Walter Monckton and the former asked Monckton as to who constituted the Government of Hyderabad—was it the Nizam and his government or was it Kasim Razvi Monckton returned to Hyderabad promising to look into the affair On April 11

Monckton wired to Mountbatten informing him that the speech of Razvi had never been delivered and that the report had simply been a calculated attempt to prevent the resumption of friendly relations However, Munshi also arrived at New Delhi on the same day, with documentary evidence Shastri, a young journalist at Hyderabad was a sort of personal secretary to Venkatrao, the Harijan Minister Shastri was present when the speech was delivered and he had taken it down in shorthand Shastri gave Munshi a signed statement and his shorthand notes Possibly Campbell-Johnson refers to Shastri when he states 'What information I have been able to collect from the various sources suggests that Razvi's meetings, public and private, are regularly attended by agents both of Munshi and Nizam '

However, Razvi came to Munshi's rescue On April 6, he declared in a speech 'the day is not far off when the waves of the Bay of Bengal will be washing the feet of our sovereign' This was reported by the Associated Press of India

In April 7, Razvi's paper came out with the astonishing statement that Munshi had turned down the suggestion of the State Congress to come to a settlement with the Nizam's government The paper added 'Peace-loving Hindus do not like the increasing interference of Mr. Munshi in the internal affairs of Hyderabad ' A leading Razakar stated in an interview that the Munshi was the *de facto* President of the State Congress and must be recalled to Delhi

Razvi went a step further and declared 'we are all aware that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is not willing to take any action *suo moto* against Hyderabad, and that he is anxious to resolve the deadlock by all peaceful means So is the Governor-General Mountbatten who does not wish

to make Hyderabad problem into another long-drawn out controversy in the present world set-up In that case where does Mr Munshi stand? He will be nowhere His importance will be lost '

Munshi did not take any part in the futile negotiations that went on interminably at New Delhi till June when the negotiations finally broke down It is futile to describe here the history of those negotiations, which followed the same pattern Laik Ali would allow himself to be persuaded by Mountbatten to certain terms, then return to Hyderabad and declare that Nizam had rejected those terms He would then return to Delhi, again agree to certain terms to be repudiated later by the Nizam The whole idea was to gain time, and pass over the period of the Standstill Agreement in futile negotiations and then declare independence

VII

As Laik Ali protracted the negotiations, the days of Mountbatten's Governor-Generalship was coming to a close and he was becoming rather impatient for a permanent settlement between India and Hyderabad But as Campbell-Johnson reports, Mountbatten found it very hard, in view of his own friendship for Monckton and his personal desire to achieve a settlement before he left, to avoid a subjective approach to the problem He had invited the Nizam to come to Delhi confident that he could win him over But the Nizam would not come, and it was not possible for Mountbatten to go to Hyderabad Under the circumstances he accepted the advice of some members of his personal staff, and sent Campbell-Johnson, his Press Attache, to go as the latter says, 'as a kind of King's

messenger Campbell-Johnson was to meet the Nizam face to face on Mountbatten's behalf, form a personal, up-to-date impression of the situation and if possible induce a sufficient sense of urgency in the Nizam and his advisers to reopen negotiations and make the best use of Mountbatten's last few weeks in India

This was possibly the worst move that could have been devised under the circumstances For its only effect was to increase the intransigence of the Nizam and Laik Ali and to thoroughly discredit Munshi and the policy he advised It appears from Campbell-Johnson's report that he failed to make any impression on the Nizam, on the contrary the Nizam felt more self-important than ever Campbell-Johnson also met Laik Ali and other Razakars, but his mission was a failure

It appears that Campbell-Johnson's visit to Hyderabad was to be absolutely hush-hush Munshi, the mere Agent-General of India, would have nothing to do with such grave affairs The time was well chosen, for Munshi was at Bangalore, and the stage was well set for a flying Briton to enter the palace of the Vazir, thence to be conducted to the old Sultan, all under the veil of the strictest secrecy and mystery of an oriental palace intrigue

Munshi, however, came to learn of Campbell-Johnson's visit and hurried back to Hyderabad, and prepared for the due reception of the 'King's messenger' Campbell-Johnson writes

> I was met on the airfield by Captain Beg on behalf of Mr Laik Ali and by no less than three representatives of Munshi's staff Their presence called for my first diplomatic decision within three minutes of arrival, for they conveyed a pressing invitation to me to call first on Munshi and to dine with him this evening I indicated that I was the personal

> guest of Mr Laik Ali and until I knew what plans he had for me, I could not make any engagements, although, of course, I would be calling on Mr Munshi Munshi, it seems, has returned specially from Bangalore in view of my visit and has ensured that what began as a confidential, anonymous mission will now be covered in a blaze of publicity, for he has advised all the press of my arrival and his return (p 327)

Campbell-Johnson, it should be added here, dined with Munshi but his estimate of Munshi can be seen from another entry in his diary El-Edroos, the Commander-in-Chief of the Hyderabad army was telling Campbell-Johnson that without undue pressure, Hyderabad would have acceded to India, and Campbell-Johnson comments that Edroos was clearly referring to Munshi Campbell-Johnson also records that 'Laik Ali was very critical of Munshi, who, he (Laik Ali) said, had openly spoken of Hyderabad as the site of old Hindu State He (Munshi) was mixing only with Congress friends, and has been putting out at regular intervals dates for the 'D' day, first on the 10th March, then later on in March, then 23rd April, until even the Hindus had ceased to believe him '

Campbell-Johnson's visit to Hyderabad had a bad press and he shifted the blame for publicity on to Munshi 'I said (to Nehru) I hoped he had not been unduly disturbed about the publicity and explained that it was primarily due to the zeal of Munshi's staff' His concluding remarks are 'The important thing is that I was not embarrassed with excessive press inquiry during the visit itself, which I might well have been as a result of Munshi's zealous efforts to publicise my arrival '

A week after Campbell-Johnson's visit, on May 22 the mail train from Madras to Bombay was attacked at Gangapur station in Hyderabad Two persons were kill-

ed, eleven seriously injured and thirteen, including four women and two children, were missing The Government of India protested but in vain

VIII

For Munshi the period of protracted negotiations had been agonising He had silently watched the Standstill Agreement being torn to shreds, while futile negotiations were carried on regardless of the havoc wrought by the Razakars and the Communists The Nizam had refused to change his Razakar ministers, and it was clear that he was only bidding for time, and had no intention of implementing any agreement

The inactivity of the Government of India had a baneful effect, for the Razakars became intoxicated with a sense of invincibility At various places on the border, they invited conflicts with the Indian troops by giving grave provocations In every case they were beaten back, whereupon they vented their wrath on the Hindu population of the neighbouring villages In the border districts they became a law unto themselves They often entered railway carriages, pulled out passengers, and robbed them They commandeered stores from private individuals They demanded food supplies and money at the point of the bayonet No non-Muslim woman could come out into the street without being molested by them

By the end of July, the depredations of the Razakars took an even uglier turn The Union enclave of Barsi in the Sholapur district of Bombay was surrounded on all sides by Hyderabad territory In order to reach this enclave, the Indian troops and armed police had to pass

through the Hyderabad village of Nanaj. As a matter of routine they did it every other day.

On July 24, a large number of Razakars, supported by recently imported Pathans, cleared Nanaj of the villagers with the assistance of the local police and laid an ambush. While a party of Indian troops was moving from Sholapur to Barsi on normal patrol duty, they were fired upon by the Razakars and the Pathans from their hideout. As a result, six Indian soldiers died and six were injured. The Indian troops immediately took up the gauntlet and after a bitter fight captured the village.

In the meanwhile, Laik Ali began to contemplate sending the Hyderabad case to the U.N.O. Hosh Yar Jung informed Sir Mirza Ismail of this development and Sir Mirza advised the Nizam not to seek the help of the U.N.O.[*] Sir Mirza then visited New Delhi at the request of the Nizam but soon discovered that opinion in New Delhi had hardened against the Nizam, and Sardar Patel, who was now in complete charge of the negotiations, was not prepared to concede the Nizam's demands. Sir Mirza, therefore, urged the Nizam to sign draft Agreement of June without consulting his ministers and, if necessary, to invite the Indian troops to protect him from the Razakars.

On August 2, Laik Ali declared that Hyderabad had decided to refer its case to the United Nations. At the same time the Nizam wrote to the President of the U.S.A. requesting him to arbitrate, but he refused. By the beginning of September, however, a Hyderabad delegation headed by Moin Nawaz proceeded to America via Karachi and presented their case to the Security Council.

By the end of August, the situation in Hyderabad had become so intolerable, that Rajagopalachari who had succeeded Lord Mountbatten as Governor-General wrote to

Nizam to ban the Razakars forthwith as it had become morally impossible for the people of India to watch in silence the agony of their brothers and sisters in Hyderabad. The Nizam's reply of September 5, accused the Governor-General for having formed a 'very wrong impression' of the conditions in Hyderabad. A few more letters were exchanged, at the end of which the Government of India replied that 'the Nizam's Government appeared determined to regard facts not as they are, but as they wished others to believe them to be, that the only law that now prevailed in the State was the law of the jungle, by which the Razakars and their allied preyed upon a large majority of the helpless citizens, or upon those who had the misfortune not to share their opinions or to participate in their activities, and that, in these circumstances, the Government of India regarded themselves as free to take such actions as they considered necessary. The responsibility and the consequences grave as they might well be, must rest on the shoulders of the Government of Hyderabad.'

On August 9, Laik Ali invited Munshi to dinner. After the dinner Munshi had a frank talk with Laik Ali in the course of which he said: "Look here, Laik Ali you always say that you have confidence in me. You were once my client, what do you gain by this sort of attitude? The agreement and the firman, as approved by Lord Mountbatten, constituted the best settlement that you could ever hope to get, you rejected them. If you would, as the Prime Minister of the Nizam, co-operate with the Government of India, you can solve the Hindu-Muslim problem of India. You will create a new state in Hyderabad, and I should not be surprised if, a few years hence, you will be hailed by the whole of India as a great Indian states-

man Why don't you accede on the three Central subjects and have done with it?"

"Mr Munshi," Laik Ali replied, "I cannot for the life of me reconcile myself to accession to India"

"Do you know that disastrous consequences will follow, if you persist in your present course?"

"Mr Munshi, there is something like *sahadat* (martyrdom)" was the reply of Laik Ali

The Government of India had about 800 employees in Hyderabad of whom about 225 were non-Muslim and non-Hyderabadi They now clamoured to be relieved of their duty, and their spokesman told Munshi "You will leave Hyderabad before a military conflict and we will be left to die" Munshi gave them a solemn promise that he would not leave Hyderabad till every one of them had left However, Munshi soon sent out of Hyderabad such personnel whose presence was no longer necessary None of the rest came to any harm during the Police Action On August 23, news was brought to Munshi that the Razakars had declared a prize of Rs 5000/- for his head But he decided to stay on

On September 7, 1948, Nehru announced in Parliament the final demands made on the Nizam, namely banning of the Razakars and the return of the Indian troops to Secunderabad An official message containing the same terms was handed over by Munshi to Laik Ali on the same day at 3 P M At 4 P M the Nizam signed a general mobilisation order

There was panic in Hyderabad On September 9 and 10, the British were evacuated mostly by plane In the evening of September 10, the Nizam's Government replied to the Government of India refusing to accede to their demands At 11-15 P M, Munshi received a message for the Nizam from the Governor-General, Rajagopalachari,

appealing to him to accept his advice Munshi inquired at King Kothi, the Nizam's residence The Nizam had gone to sleep.

The message from the Governor-General was delivered the next day, but as the Nizam's Government did not send any reply, an ultimatum was sent through Munshi in the evening of September 12

The same evening Munshi had gone to dine with Laik Ali After some friendly conversation Laik Ali asked Munshi to leave Hyderabad before anything happened "Your presence would embarrass us considerably I will place, if you like, an aeroplane at your disposal," Laik Ali said Munshi thanked Laik Ali, but added that whatever happened his (Munshi's) place was in Hyderabad, and he had decided to stay on

While parting, Munshi felt that this was their last meeting, so he made a final appeal to Laik Ali to avoid the risk of a conflict and reminded Laik Ali that there was even at that time a chance for a compromise Laik Ali emphatically declared that he would never let Hyderabad go with India

IX

On the morning of September 12, Munshi had a talk with Sardar Patel on the telephone Sardar Patel hinted that things were moving 'The bullock cart must some time or other come out of the rut,' he said using a Gujarati phrase In the early hours of Monday, September 13, the Indian troops entered Hyderabad State

Munshi received the news over the radio in the morning Shortly after lorry loads of Razakars, brandishing weapons and shaking their lances threateningly began to

pass the road At about 2 P M two Hyderabad Officers came and demanded that the Indian guards of Munshi should surrender their arms and station themselves in the nearly Medows Barracks Munshi was again advised to return to India, but as he refused, he was requested to move into the Greenlands guest house with his personal staff These two officers, however, had no clear instruction, so Munshi sent them back with his Military Secretary to Laik Ali to get orders

Soon after Munshi found out that troops were in the neighbourhood So he rang up Mrs Munshi to bid her good-bye He also rang up Sardar Patel and told him that this would probably be their last talk, as in a few moments the telephone would be out of action

Immediately Menon rang up from Delhi and asked Munshi not to worry, the Government of India had full faith in him As Menon was talking, the line went dead before the message was complete, and Munshi came down to find a Hyderabad Brigadier rushing into his house with four or five lorry loads of soldiers, and the Indian troops who had not yet surrendered their arms, taking position to oppose them

The situation was critical, Munshi shouted to the Indian guards to lay down their arms Major Singh, Munshi's Officer, rushed between the two groups and averted a serious catastrophe Though the few Indian guards were several times outnumbered by the Hyderabad troops, they would certainly not have surrendered their arms unless ordered by their officer

As soon as the Indian guards made way, the Hyderabad soldiers and some Razakars rushed into the house shouting "*Pakdo, Maro*", broke into every room in the ground floor and arrested all servants The Brigadier then with two soldiers burst on the first floor and, enter-

ing Munshi's sitting room, asked him brusquely to accompany him to Greenlands at once

Munshi lost his temper He shouted at the Brigadier, protesting against the outrage, and refused to move unless the Brigadier and his men behaved properly This had the desired effect and Munshi then asked Major Singh to arrange matters with the Hyderabad authorities

In the afternoon at about 5 P M Munshi and his personal staff were taken to Greenlands under proper military escort The same evening, Mrs El Edroos, wife of the Hyderabad Commander-in-Chief, came to see Munshi She was very friendly, apologised on behalf of her husband for the behaviour of the Brigadier, and whispered that in the opinion of her husband, the Police Action would not last for more than three days

Next day, September 14 Munshi was interned in Lake View, the palatial guest house where the Moncktons used to live Soldiers were posted in the compound, as well as in the corridors and verandahs of the ground floor He was completely cut off from the outside world

Laik Ali came to see Munshi on the afternoon of the 14th, gravely solicitous of the latter's comfort Laik Ali also apologised for his inability to allow Munshi to move out of the house, as there was a risk of his being abused or even maltreated by the Razakars He was however extremely indignant at the Indian troops entering Hyderabad from three sides Munshi rather damped his righteous indignation by inquiring whether it was expected that the Indian troops would first present their cards to Laik Ali and next seek his permission to enter Hyderabad However, Laik Ali restored to Munshi his cook who had been arrested earlier with the other servants

Munshi had settled down to a routine of *dhyan*, reading the *Gita* and writing his diary in the form of a sequel

to his triology of historical novels, using the names of historical characters, but in a setting which would have enabled Mrs Munshi to follow what had happened to him The rest of the time he spent with his personal staff who had rallied around him loyally

On the 15th the A.I R announced the capture of Naldurg The Hyderabad radio announced great victories for Hyderabad Munshi was slightly uncertain about the actual position as he walked down to take his usual walk late that afternoon Munshi saw while coming down towards the lawn, an N C O and eight or ten guards at the end of the garden beyond his drawing room As he was descending the steps, the N C O waved his hand at him to go back inside the house Munshi took no notice of the N C O's sign and stepped on the lawn, and the enraged man shouted *'Andar jao'* Munshi without paying any heed proceeded as usual and the N C O with his men came within eight or ten yards and cocked their guns at him, and began to shout *Andar jao, andar jao* Munshi calmly stood where he was and told the N C O to address him properly and to fetch his officer from inside the house The N C O shouted that he was acting under orders But Munshi refused to go in and stood there facing the guns levelled at him In the meantime, someone came and whispered something in the ear of the N C O, who thereupon retired telling Munshi with a threatening gesture that many things could still happen

That night Munshi could not sleep and the idea gradually took firm hold on his mind that the Razakars would murder him All through the night he thought of his parents, his early life, his family He was satisfied that he had done his duty towards them as well as towards his country He got up in the early hours of the morning, took a bath and read from the *Bhagavad-Gita* He then

sang all the lines of the devotional songs he could remember This relieved him and he went to sleep. When he rose late in the morning he had a temperature of 100°.

During the next day temperature fluctuated between 100° and 103° The Hyderabad broadcasts of great victory reacted on his febrile nerves But he was relieved when in the afternooon Raja Mahboob Karan saw him on behalf of the Prince of Berar The Raja informed him that Naldurg, which according to official estimates, was strong enough to stand for three months, had been occupied by the Indian army within a few hours

X

Late at night on September 16, Deen Yar Jung came to see Munshi and told him that the Nizam sought his advice For, in the meantime, El Edroos had gone to the Nizam and told him bluntly that further resistance against the Indian army was useless The Nizam had then asked Laik Ali to resign but he had refused, stating that he wanted ten days' time to consider The Nizam did not know what to do Would Munshi be kind enough to show him a way out?

Munshi could not contact New Delhi So he gave the only possible advice, namely, that the Nizam should comply with the demands of the Government of India in all respects, order his troops to surrender unconditionally and welcome the Police Action, dismiss Laik Ali ministry, ban the Razakars and arrest Razvi and release Swami Ramananda Tirtha and other Congressmen in prison

On the morning of September 17, General El Edroos came to see Munshi He confirmed the report of Deen Yar Jung that, again on that morning, the Nizam had asked

Laik Ali to resign, and that this time he had agreed to do so El Edroos also told him that the Nizam would invite him at 4 P M to seek his advice A little later Raja Mehboob Karan came and confirmed El Edroos's report

At 11 A M Laik Ali himself came to Munshi and informed him that he had submitted his resignation He then left on the pretext of going to the mosque for prayers promising to return later on his way back As a matter of fact, as Munshi learned later, Laik Ali and his cabinet had gathered at Laik Ali's residence, and were burning important papers Hyderabad radio at this time was describing the brilliant feats of the Hyderabad army who, after sweeping through the country side, was approaching Goa!

At 1 P M Laik Ali returned and handed over to Munshi the following message signed by the Nizam to be transmitted to Rajaji, the Governor-General 'My Government has tendered its resignation and asked me to take the political situation into my hand completely In answer to this I have informed them that I am sorry this was not done earlier, and it is too late for me to do anything at this critical juncture However, I inform your Excellency that I have ordered cease-fire to my troops by this evening, and also have ordered to disband the Razakars and am allowing the Indian troops to occupy Bolaram and Secunderabad barracks'

The Nizam's message then went on to state that he had constituted a new cabinet of old and faithful public servants, and invited Sir Mirza Ismail to be the President, and if this arrangement met with Rajaji's approval, he would send a chartered plane to bring Sir Mirza to Hyderabad and carry on negotiations

The latter portion was an ingenious device to ignore all that had happened since Lord Mountbatten's departure

It was so ridiculous that Munshi advised the Nizam to transmit only the first part. Munshi was informed immediately by Deen Yar Jung that the Nizam agreed to this suggestion. While these parleys were taking place, Laik Ali was broadcasting his resignation and informing the startled Razakars that there was no point in sacrificing further human blood, against heavy odds.

In spite of his temperature, Munshi went to Dakshina Sadan to transmit the Nizam's message to the Governor-General. In the excitement of victory, he had forgotten his ailment. Soon a letter came from the Nizam requesting Munshi to see him at 4 P.M.

When Munshi arrived at the King Kothi at the appointed time, he found that Nizam in a state of near collapse. With a trembling hand, he gave Munshi the resignation letter of Laik Ali and added that "the vultures have resigned". Munshi at that time was however more concerned about the unarmed citizens of Hyderabad, for several thousand Razakars were still at large in the city. It was also known that Razvi had distributed rifles and ammunition with instructions to kill as many Hindus as they could. Munshi therefore told the Nizam that General El Edroos should be immediately called and made responsible for law and order in the city. So the Nizam sent for El Edroos, and, when he came, Munshi explained to him the situation and the Nizam asked for his opinion. El Edroos replied that the proper thing for him would be to take charge of the city and surrender it to General Chowdhury when he arrived. Nizam then gave El Edroos the necessary orders and he left.

Nizam then told Munshi that he was sending a plane to bring Sir Mirza. Munshi replied that he had received no communication from the Government of India and was unable to advice the Nizam on this point. The Nizam then

proposed that Deen Yar Jung and El Edroos should carry on the administration till the receipt of instructions from arrangement as till recently Edroos and Deen Yar Jung had been with the Razakars So he told the Nizam that anything done hereafter would have to be approved by the States Ministry, and pending the arrival of General Chowdhury it would be better to associate a few Hindus with the administration Nizam then asked for names, and Munshi suggested the names of Ramachari and Pannalal Pittie The Nizam then suggested one Abul Hasan Syed Ali to be added to which Munshi agreed Munshi also suggested that the Prince of Berar should be the Chairman and the Nizam agreed This committee was to be in control of the city pending the arrival of the Indian troops

The Security Council was meeting at Paris with Moin Nawaz pleading Hyderabad's case against India Therefore, and in view of the fact that the Nizam had sought his advice and accepted it, Munshi told the Nizam that he (Nizam) should broadcast a talk welcoming the Police Action, and stating that he had invited the Union troops to enter Hyderabad to help him in restoring order in the State, and that he was withdrawing the submission which had been made by the Laik Ali ministry to the Security Council

The Nizam had never been inside a broadcasting station In reply to his nervous inquiry, Munshi assured him that he would only have to speak in front of a tube and the rest would be done by others Still the Nizam was not fully satisfied and, at his request, Munshi agreed to accompany him to the broadcasting station and say a few words.

Munshi left the Nizam promising to meet at the broadcasting station and proceeded to pay a courtesy call on Laik Ali, who had invariably shown him every outward

mark of consideration Munshi found Laik Ali in a resigned mood, but they parted as friends

Munshi then went to El Edroos and asked him to remove the mines, which he knew had been planted around Hyderabad He then discussed with El Edroos the formalities of surrender It was decided that Prince of Berar, the *dejure* Commander-in-Chief, should offer the formal surrender, and that El Edroos should accompany him The Prince, on being informed, replied that he would be willing to do so if Munshi accompanied him Munshi therefore sent a wireless message to General Rajendrasinghji informing him of the arrangement

From El Edroos's place, Munshi went straight to the broadcasting station After the Nizam had finished his talk, Munshi said over the radio

> I am speaking from the Nizam s radio as H E H asked to do it I take this opportunity because other means of communications are not available for the moment Last night I was contacted and I conveyed to H E H the meaning and purpose of the Police Action which my Government was taking to restore law and order in Hyderabad I am glad to say that H E H was pleased to appreciate the action and issued the cease-fire order this morning I have conveyed to H E C Rajagopalachariar the message sent by H E H
>
> I want to speak particularly to the people of Hyderabad Their lot is cast with the people of India We are one people and we cannot be parted We must continue to remain, to use H E H 's phrase, 'in integrated harmony' so that free India may be great in every sphere of life One assurance I can give you—an assurance again and again given by our Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru India is

a secular State. It knows no difference of religion or race To every man it gives the full rights of citizenship And neither Hindus nor Muslims need be apprehensive of the treatment I request the people not to get into a panic The entry of the troops will take place in a spirit of friendliness No breach of law and order would be tolerated and no peaceful citizen will be molested The Indian army is an army of friends come to rescue the life of Hyderabad from the nightmare of the last twelve months I appeal to the Hindus and Muslims both to act with mutual trust and good-will to enable Hyderabad achieve its honoured place as an integral part of India

The streets which had been dismally empty in the morning were now full of cheering crowds and an amazingly large number of National Flags were being paraded Munshi s progress from the broadcasting station to his house was interrupted several times and he had to get down from his car and deliver short speeches at a few places He utilised these occasions to advise the crowd not to stage any demonstrations or to indulge in violence

At last he returned home at about 8 in the night with a high temperature and completely exhausted by the hectic activities of the day The first thing that greeted him was the following telegram from the Prime Minister of India

> You should not, repeat not, broadcast tonight You should not make any commitment on our behalf without instructions
>
> Hyderabad army should formally surrender to our Army Commander
>
> Pending further instructions our Army Commander will be in charge of the general administration
>
> The surrender will be purely military function

> in which you will not participate and you should not enter Secunderabad with the army column

Munshi replied

> Your wireless received after my broadcast was delivered Have made no commitments Am cancelling arrangements so far as I am concerned and carrying out your instructions Hope you will forgive me if I have committed a *faux pas*

It is difficult after this lapse of about a decade to understand the motive underlying the telegram to Munshi Possibly the Government of India did not want their representative to get mixed up with military operations It is quite probable that certain quarters in New Delhi construed Munshi's action as extricating the Nizam from a very difficult situation But these critics could not realise at the time that Munshi by his action removed uncertainty and confusion and avoided a massacre of the innocents which would have followed if the Nizam himself had not invited the Indian army It was not realised by some at the time that it was the Nizam's broadcast which straightened out India's position before the Security Council

Whatever others might have thought, Sardar Patel was sure in his mind about the magnificent manner in which his nominee had carried out his assignment When Munshi resigned his office, Sardar wrote to him as follows —

> You accepted the office of Agent-General at a time when the relations between Hyderabad and India were very strained and you worked unremittingly and with single-minded devotion to duty and at very great personal sacrifice to bring the Hyderabad problem to a successful conclusion The ten months during which you had the office of Agent-General have been a momentous period in the history

of Hyderabad and India On behalf of the Government, I wish to say that we are deeply conscious of the high sense of public duty that induced you to accept this office and the very able manner in which you discharged the duties entrusted to you, which contributed in no small measure to the final result

The Government of India also issued a press note placing on record 'their deep appreciation of the high sense of public duty that induced Mr Munshi to accept this office and the very able manner in which he discharged the duties entrusted to him '

Contemporary opinion has already anticipated the verdict of history in regard to the role of Munshi in solving the Hyderabad question Winston Churchill once said during the Second World War that he considered himself to be slipping if he did not get his daily quota of abuse from the Nazi press It is noteworthy that the Razakar press reserved their most venomous attacks for Sardar Patel and Munshi

CHAPTER VIII

FRAMING THE CONSTITUTION

I

A DISTINGUISHED statesman, while paying tribute to India's achievements since the advent of freedom, lists the integration of Princely States and the framing of a democratic Constitution as the twin causes which have contributed to the stability of the nascent democracy K M Munshi can legitimately lay the flattering unction to his soul that he has played a major role in both these tasks To the task of Constitution-making he brought not only his legal acumen but a patriotic fervour which had made him since his student days worship the Motherland as the *Punyabhoomi*

Though the Cabinet Mission Plan was scrapped by the Mountbatten Plan of June 3, 1947, yet it is the Constituent Assembly set up by the former that framed a democratic constitution for free India It is unnecessary to go at length into the tortuous negotiations that the Cabinet Mission consisting of Lord Pethick Lawrence, A V Alexander and Sir Stafford Cripps along with Lord Wavell, the Governor-General, had with the leaders of various political parties The Mission arrived in New Delhi on March 24, 1946 and stayed in India for three months The intransigence of the Muslim League made any agreement impossible except by conceding its demands in toto The struggle was between the Congress ideal of a united India and the League demand for the vivisection of the country based on the two-nations theory Foiled in their attempt to bring about an agreement between these dramatically

opposite positions, the Cabinet Mission formulated a compromise Plan

Under this Plan, a Constituent Assembly was to frame a constitution for the country But the Central government was to be a tenuous and nebulous one limited to three subjects, Defence, External Affairs and Communication As if this was not enough, any major communal issue was to be decided only by the majority vote of the community concerned India was divided into three groups Group A consisting of Madras, Bombay, Central Provinces, United Provinces, Bihar and Orissa, Group B consisting of Bengal and Assam, Group C consisting of Punjab, Sind, the North West Frontier Province and British Baluchistan The groups were to have their constitutions and they had also the right to review the national Constitution after every ten years Within the group Constitution, each province was to frame its own Constitution

At this distance of time, it is difficult to understand how or why the Congress leaders accepted this cumbrous Plan with its three tier constitution manacled with saving clauses and throttled with provisos The only explanation that is possible is that they were in a hurry to get rid of the British The Congress leaders perhaps thought that once the British left India, the Hindus and the Muslims would get along together They also believed that Pakistan was a bargaining point and that, once safeguards were secured, the League would join hands with the Congress to create a strong and united India

It seems incredible today that the Plan seemed to many as leading to the land of promise Gandhiji saw in it the seeds to 'convert this land of sorrow into one without sorrow and suffering', and even the sage from the solitary grandeur of Pondicherry recommended to the Congress its complete acceptance But the mind of the Muslim League

was unpredictable Probably it was not known fully even to its leaders, who subsequently said that the acceptance of the Cabinet Mission Plan did not mean abandonment of the goal of Pakistan, they were prepared to accept it as a stepping stone to the desired heaven To this, Pandit Nehru replied that the Congress also did not commit itself to anything more than merely entering the Constituent Assembly

The situation was indeed full of unpredictable developments Meanwhile, some Congress leaders began to see that the Plan was full of pitfalls The provisions for grouping the provinces first and setting up 'group Constitutions' with a right to claim revision of the national Constitution after a lapse of ten years seemed to contain Pakistan in embryo even if Pakistan was not thought of, the Centre which the Cabinet Mission Plan wanted to set up was an extremely weak one, all it had was the power for Defence, External Affairs and Communications with perhaps an ineffective power of raising the finances required for them Thus it contained an inherent danger, and Munshi was one of those who saw it

Munshi had been one of the legal advisers of the Congress delegation negotiating with the Cabinet Mission His return to the Congress after blazing a lone trail was a foregone conclusion, his place in the Congress hierarchy was always there It was early in 1946 that he officially returned to the Congress fold.

II

Early in February 1946, Chief Justice Stone of Bombay asked Munshi whether he would lead a team of lawyers to go to Japan in order to prosecute Premier Tojo and other alleged war criminals But Munshi declined His

reasoning was clear Japan was one of the warring nations She had fought the war for her national ambitions on exactly the same basis as the rest had done, and failed. As a result, hers were already the woes of the vanquished To inflict a postmortem condemnation on her appeared to Munshi to be vindictive, as it could only make the reconciliation, which must eventually come, difficult

On February 18, the day before Attlee announced the Cabinet Mission, Munshi went to Gandhiji who had just arrived in Bombay, and discussed with him the offer of the Chief Justice He approved of Munshi's reply and asked him to rejoin the Congress He placed himself at Gandhiji's disposal as, in fact, he always had been He went to the office of the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee, signed an admission form and paid the four annas

Munshi was also invited by Major Woodrow Wyatt, M P, to attend the Fabian Conference which was to be held in March But Wyatt himself came to India with Cripps and the Conference stood adjourned

On May 16, the Cabinet Mission announced their historic Plan Munshi's diary note runs

> May 16 Plan accepted by the Congress, more as a start than as the end of the journey If it is implemented, India will be cut up into four one Hindu, two Muslim and one princely The Centre is bound to be weak The Hindus of Bengal and Assam will be crushed, the malignant spirit of the zonal division of India invoked by Professor Coupland will stalk the land

Munshi's old friend, Jinnah, continued to play his part with superb adroitness He never let a single practical advantage go by or failed to keep his eye on his cherished aim of Pakistan Under his leadership the Muslim League negotiated, threatened, broke away, announced policies

and repudiated them, rejected the Plan of May 16, but accepted it later to blow it up

On July 10 Gandhiji told Munshi that the Working Committee of the Congress had appointed a Committee of Experts to prepare materials and draft proposals for the Constituent Assembly and that Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Congress President had appointed Munshi as one of its members "You should give up whatever you are doing and take up this work, he said "It is very important and you will have to bear your share of the burden"

Next day, Munshi received Nehru's letter asking him to join the Expert Committee The other members, besides Nehru himself, were Asaf Ali, N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, K T Shah, K Santhanam, Humayun Kabir and D R Gadgil

On his being appointed to the Committee Munshi plunged himself headlong into preparations for the first meeting which was to be held about July 20, in Delhi By August 4 his first draft of the rules of business of the Constituent Assembly was ready It had been rather a tough job

After Munshi was asked to join the Expert Committee of the Congress he began the preliminary exercise of preparing a draft Constitution In the middle of August, V K Krishna Menon spent a few days with him in Bombay, helping him to go over a part of the ground He was extremely helpful but he suddenly left for England, and Munshi was left alone to complete his labours

Pandit Nehru asked Munshi to discuss the draft Constitution with Gopalaswamy Ayyangar. So began the partnership—they were already good friends—in this great venture In those early days, Munshi and Ayyangar met almost every day, discussing drafts problems and moves

From October of 1946 until the end of 1947, Munshi lived with the Birlas at 5, Albuquerque Road, New Delhi Sardar also stayed there until he moved to Aurungzeb Road At the time Gandhiji on occasions camped there when he visited Delhi This gave Munshi a great opportunity to be in touch with the various activities of far-reaching effect of which the Birla House was the nerve-centre

III

Munshi had in the meantime finished his draft constitution

This preliminary draft of about 30 articles had the following preamble —

> This Constituent Assembly, representing the Indian people and the territories of British India seeking the welfare of a united and independent Motherland, votes and confirms this Constitution

Articles I and II of the draft ran as follows —

> Article I The Union of India
>
> The Union of India is a democratic Sovereign Republic
>
> Article II Sovereignty of the People
>
> All powers of government and all authority, executive, legislative and judicial, are derived from the sovereign people of India and the same shall be exercised in the Union and the States, and the rights, interests and liberties of the people served and secured through the organs established by, under, or in accordance with its Constitution

As can be seen from the preamble, the sovereign power vested in the people of India, one and indivisible, neither

classes nor states—organised through the organs set up by the Constitution and expressing their will through their directly elected representatives Munshi later explained

> The main difficulty in the way of our people being regarded as a whole was the statutory minorities created by the British constitutional devices in the past They would fight hard, even to the extent of thwarting national sovereignty, for their vested interests To overcome this difficulty, we devised an organ of Government called the President in Council a sort of King in Council as known in the older days in British constitutional history, but with some of the powers of the Senate of the U S A
>
> The Council was to consist of the President, certain Ministers and ten Vice-Presidents, two of whom were to be from among hereditary rulers, two Hindus two Muslims one Sikh, one Christian, one Anglo-Indian and one Parsi The President-in-Council was vested with somewhat extensive powers, including voting, legislation, appointing ambassadors and issuing ordinances

This ingenuous device makes interesting reading at this distance of time This attempt at solving an insoluble situation by a constitutional device, even if it had been accepted by the Muslim League, would have been unworkable It was an ingenuous attempt, but a forlorn hope

This preliminary exercise, however, gave Munshi an insight into the challenges which the Constituent Assembly would have to meet He analysed them as follows —

> First, there was the challenge of the British policies and the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 16
>
> Secondly, there was the challenge of disruptive tendencies in the country represented by the Muslim League and certain other groups

Thirdly, there was the challenge of the statutory minorities

Fourthly, there was the challenge which new democracies always present to any effort at setting up a strong centre with plenary powers

Fifthly, there was the challenge of irresponsibility naturally found when vast power is acquired by a people without attaining political maturity

On October 15, 1946 Jinnah decided that the League representatives should join the Interim Government in order, to use his words, 'to get a foothold to fight for Pakistan' Having joined the Government, the Muslim League repudiated joint responsibility The Congress members of the Interim Government were in despair, they threatened to resign 'Our patience is fast reaching the limit,' said Nehru 'If these things continue, a struggle on a large scale is inevitable'

Ultimately, in response to Attlee's appeal, the Viceroy as well as the leaders of the Congress and the League went to England for a discussion on how to make the Constituent Assembly successful

Jinnah now added a new demand exchange of population Sir Chimanlal Setalvad called it impracticable, Sardar rejected it as absurd Jinnah, however, knew his own mind

IV

Nehru returned from London on December 7 The Constituent Assembly opened on December 9 The Muslim League boycotted the session, neither were the States' representatives present Munshi's impressions of the inaugural session noted in his diary make vivid reading

Excitement everywhere A great day for India has dawned Indians are going to frame their own Constitution, but there is unhappiness everywhere

I am in the Hall early Gopalaswamy meets me on the way If a non-party man has to be chosen, he is likely to be the President He modestly disclaims the honour

As I enter the Hall, I am stirred to the core of my being With lights and decorations it makes a fitting birthplace of a free nation

Members standing around in small groups are talking excitedly Friends are here from all over the country We shake hands talk enthusiastically, but the cheerfulness is forced

Churchill's declaration has been ominous Jinnah has threatened the country with disaster Wavell has fled from Delhi for the day Either partition or the sacrifice of crores of Hindus—that is the price—a very heavy price—demanded of us

I go over to H V R Iyengar The British Government has sent no message for the Constituent Assembly, they have refused to recognise it The U S A, China, Australia, however, have sent messages of goodwill

Some groups are discussing who the President should be The Congress opinion, however, is crystallising The President must be a leading Congressman Many eyes are turned towards Rajendra Babu Without effort he makes people turn to him in a difficult situation, almost a case of unquestionable attraction of moral strength

Kripalani enters, with his long hair, he looks like a temperamental revolutionary We talk about the

outcome of the London discussions He is cynical and indifferent

Sardar comes in, all smiles, and accosts the members, but evidently, he is in a truculent mood Smt Naidu enters, vivacious as a girl in her teens, spreading sunshine all round Jayakar takes his seat, aloof and taciturn He coldly acknowledges my greetings

Panditji enters There are cheers He smiles all round, flings his leather-case in the air, catches it and takes his seat Congress members surround him as they want to know what is happening

I walk over to my seat in the second row just behind Sardar and Kher, who wears an air of Chief Ministerial gravity Shankarrao has his seat on my right We talk anxiously about what is going to happen

At 11 o'clock Kripalani, the Congress President, proposed Dr Sachchidananda Sinha, the oldest member of the House, as the provisional Chairman and conducted him to the Chair The Chairman then read out his address emphasising certain words with his rare sense of humour

As he read out the address, my mind went back to our first contact in 1909 when I was in College, and I wrote an article for the *Hindustan Review* He was an important man then, but he wrote me a nice letter which, in those dreary days, gave me great encouragement

He (Sinha) wants us to 'build for immortality' I wish we could do so He appeals for vision Where there is no vision, the people perish he says The speech is received with thunderous cheers

The ceremony of taking the oath was replaced by the Secretary calling out the names of each mem-

ber H V. R Iyengar called each one of us by name, we proudly walked up to the table and signed our names.

The note of the days ends with the remark For the moment the spirit of triumph is in the air, but the smell of coming danger persists '

Munshi's forebodings about coming danger were not groundless, for as soon as the Constituent Assembly met, two challenges had to be faced The first came from Sir Winston Churchill who, in a parliamentary debate, had doubted the validity of the Constituent Assembly itself Can the British Cabinet which had given birth to it decide to kill it? The second proceeded from the Muslim League If it came in, would it accept the Constituent Assembly and its rules as binding on the Sections and the Committees?

According to the rules drafted by the Expert Committee, the Constituent Assembly had the right to frame the rules for the Constituent Assembly, for the Sections and the Committees To respect the susceptibilities of the Muslim League, Acharya Kripalani, while moving the resolution for setting up a fifteen-member committee of the Constituent Assembly for drafting rules of procedure, dropped the words "and for Sections and Committees" from the original draft Immediately there were protests Members led by the leaders of Bengal, which happened to be placed in the predominantly Muslim Section, protested against the omission

In reply, Acharya Kripalani relied upon the implied supremacy of the Constituent Assembly, the words 'Sections and Committees', he urged, were superfluous The retort was obvious and Munshi gave it vehemently Munshi realised the danger in leaving this vital matter vague and leaving it open to dispute at a later stage—whether

the Assembly was the complete master of the situation or not? He warned the Assembly thus

> It would be extremely unwise, I submit, Sir, to omit, the words, 'sections and committees' because that would show that this Constituent Assembly is not a self-determining and self-governing institution which we insist it is. We may lay ourselves open to the argument that any part or any Section of it or any Committee of it can function independently or frame its own rules It should be laid down definitely by this House that the Constituent Assembly is one and indivisible, that the Sections, as already pointed out, are Sections of the Assembly, and that they do not form independent bodies which can provide for procedure inconsistently with the rules of the Constituent Assembly

Needless to say that the House immediately veered round to this view and the resolution was accordingly modified Munshi's papers show that two sets of draft rules were prepared—one by Munshi and the other by Santhanam The Committee, which worked under great pressure, finally produced a set of rules, more or less based on Munshi's draft which created the definite implication that the Constituent Assembly was a sovereign body

One such was the rule designating the presiding officer of the Assembly as the 'President' and then making him 'the guardian of the privileges of the Assembly, its spokesman and representative and its highest executive authority' Explaining its significance, Munshi said 'We are functioning as an independent body For the moment, an organisation has been lent to this Assembly by the Government of India, but immediately the rules are passed, we will have an organisation of our own and the President will naturally be the highest executive authority of

the organisation' Another rule, rule 7, made it clear beyond any shadow of doubt that the Assembly was a sovereign body by providing that it could be dissolved only by a resolution passed by itself That meant that the House from then onwards was autonomous and independent of the British Government, which had brought it into existence It is even now a moot question whether the Constituent Assembly, when instituted, was sovereign or not, and Munshi himself thinks that it was not. but whatever might be the theoretical considerations, Rule 7 made it *de facto* sovereign

V

On December 13 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru moved the Objectives Resolution, describing it as 'a solemn pledge to our people which they would redeem in the Constitution they would frame' The fundamental propositions laid down in the resolution, he said, 'are not controversial'.

Dr M R Jayakar then moved a substitute resolution He referred to future India only as a free and democratic state, and proposed the postponement of the Objectives Resolution with 'a view to securing the co-operation of the Muslim League and the Indian States'

Dr B R Ambedkar and Frank Anthony, who supported Dr Jayakar, however, made it clear that they did so for reasons other than those given by him

Sir N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar in his telling way replied that the Constituent Assembly had the residuary power in full for accomplishing the tasks which had been undertaken Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar, the most outstanding lawyer in the Constituent Assembly, defined the basic sovereignty which underlay the Cabinet Mission's

Statement The discussion on the Objectives Resolution, however, remained unfinished

On December 21 Munshi moved two resolutions, one to set up a Negotiating Committee to negotiate with the Chamber of Princes, the other for adopting the report of the Procedure Committee containing the draft rules

By the rules, a steering committee was set up 'to act as a general liaison body between the Assembly and its office, between the sections *inter se*, between committees *inter se*, and between the President and any part of the Assembly'

The rules also laid down 'The President shall be the guardian of the privileges of the Assembly, its spokesman and representative and its highest executive authority'

The most important rule laid down that the Constituent Assembly should not be dissolved except by a resolution of the Assembly passed by at least two-thirds of the whole number of the members of the Assembly The rules were adopted on December 23

Thus, the Constituent Assembly established its sovereign status, enabling it to bring into existence any government it thought best

On the opening of the Constituent Assembly, Munshi became actively associated with its work in several capacities He drafted the first set of rules and was the member of the Rules Committee, the Steering Committee, of the Judiciary Committee, of the Advisory Committee and the Sub-Committees on Fundamental Rights and on Minorities, of the Union Constitution Committee, of the Model Provincial Constitution Committee in 1948, and of the Drafting Committee which gave final shape to the Constitution In fact no other member of the Assembly was included in so many committees and none else played a more conspicuous part.

Munshi enjoyed the confidence of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dr Rajendra Prasad, the President, and quite a large number of members of the Assembly His active and close collaboration in this work included such eminent men as Sir N Gopalaswami Ayyangar and Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar

Sir Alladi was ailing at the time and though he possessed extraordinary legal acumen and astute knowledge of constitutional law, he had little taste for politics and less for party manœuvres Sir N Gopalaswami was a man of vast and varied experience of administration, and possessed sound commonsense and a great ability for harmonising different points of view These three generally agreed on all essentials, and evolved formulae by constant discussion, while Munshi supplemented their activities by his political adroitness Munshi himself refers to his collaborators in these terms

> I had the rare privilege of being associated with my friend Sir Gopalaswami Ayyangar from the beginning He was a wise man, of sound commonsense and with his vast administrative experience and skill in evolving formulæ he provided the balancing factor on many important occasions
>
> About the beginning of December, we came to be associated with Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar, who was an old friend of us both From that time, till January, 1950, when the Constitution was finally accepted, we three worked in close co-operation under the guidance of Panditji and Sardar We were what might be called the 'Three Musketeers' of the Constituent Assembly To me the other two were most indulgent Neither of them was a party man, as I was, and in most cases, the political or party manoeuvres were left to me.

VI

It was a long way from the Cabinet Mission Plan of May 16, 1946 to the Mountbatten Plan of June 1947 Though extending over only about thirteen months, it was a period of anxiety and suspense, of schemes and counter-schemes, of feverish activity and continuous negotiations, leading of course to the inevitable destiny Munshi had his share of this burden, and he, along with others, made the best of a bad bargain To him, the Cabinet Mission Plan was no more than a broad outline the details of which could be altered to suit our requirements when the time came for filling the details

Munshi realised his own responsibilities, for constitution-making was a new art in which none but the very few surviving experts of the old Round Table Conferences had any experience Munshi, as a constitutional lawyer, realised that making a new constitution required more than mere knowledge of constitutional law It appears that, from the very beginning, he began to study constitution-making, as a student prepares for his examination Anyone who goes through Munshi's papers cannot help wondering at the patience of a busy man of sixty sitting for hours together, reading text-books and relevant case-law, making notes, and marshalling arguments on paper And what a wealth of information he collected during that short period!

On June 3, 1947, the Mountbatten Plan was accepted by the Congress and the Muslim League By this Plan, His Majesty's Government agreed to transfer power on the basis of Dominion Status to two successor governments —India and Pakistan It may be mentioned here that Munshi had all along been in favour of accepting Dominion Status. He had ever contended that a Dominion which

enjoyed the right to change its constitution was independent in the fullest sense of the term It is noteworthy that the Congress which had plumped for independence and turned its back on Dominion Status should at last have veered round to Munshi's view

It is ironic that Munshi who walked out of the Congress on the issue of Akhand Hindustan should have accepted with alacrity the Mountbatten Plan which divided the country His work in the Constituent Assembly and his knowledge of the working of the Interim Government had convinced Munshi that the irredentism of the Muslim League would ultimately plunge India into utter chaos The Cabinet Mission Plan had within it the seeds of disruption.

In a speech to the Constituent Assembly Munshi said that the limitations imposed on the Assembly by the Mission's Plan were like the ancient Roman method for the punishment of parricides who were tied in a bag with a monkey, a snake and a cock and then drowned in the river They had now got out of the Roman bag and were free to have a federation of their own choice, with as strong a centre as they could make it

Continuing, Munshi said

> The more we saw the Plan (Cabinet Mission's), the more we found the minorities struggling to get loose, the sections gnawing at the vitals and we had the double majority clause poisoning the very existence Whatever other members may feel, I feel, thank God, that we have got out of this bag at last We have no sections and groups to go into, no elaborate procedure as was envisaged by it no double majority clause, no more provinces with residuary powers, no opting out, no revision after ten years, and no longer only four categories of powers for the

> Centre We, therefore, feel free to form a federation of our choice, a federation with a Centre as strong as we can make it We have now a homogenous country, though our frontiers are shrunk—let us hope only for the moment—and we can look forward to going out unhesitatingly towards our cherished goal of strength and independence

With the acceptance of partition, all external challenges to the sovereignty of the Constituent Assembly disappeared India's sovereignty was constitutionally established This sovereignty had to be enshrined in a constitution This was the task that confronted the leaders and Munshi played a great and glorious part in the framing of the Constitution Some facets of his important contributions are treated below subject-wise

VII

The most important portion of the Constitution is that relating to fundamental rights Even according to the Cabinet Plan, one of the early tasks of the Constituent Assembly was to appoint a sub-committee, called the Advisory Committee, including representatives of all minority communities This Committee had to prepare, among other things, a scheme of safeguards and the manner of enforcing them, to be included in the Constitution The Constituent Assembly accordingly proceeded to appoint this Committee notwithstanding the fact that the Muslim League had not come into it The final list of members chosen for this Committee included besides Munshi, Sir Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar, Sir N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, Dr B R Ambedkar, Frank Anthony and Bakshi Tek Chand Sardar Patel was the Chairman of this Commit-

tee Maulana Azad and some leading nationalist Muslims were there to represent the view-point of the Nationalist Muslims, several seats were kept vacant to accomodate the Muslim League should it choose to come into the Constituent Assembly

This Committee had to recommend among other things, Fundamental Rights the nature of Judiciary, the safeguards for Minorities

As the Cabinet Mission Plan envisaged it, the scope of this Committee was limited, but as its decisions were to be placed before the Constituent Assembly as a whole, those decisions could influence the whole constitution and regulate the internal political life of the country on democratic lines The Advisory Committee set up four sub-committees, one to report on Fundamental Rights, another to recommend the safeguards for minorities, the third for Tribal Areas, and the fourth to devise the judiciary Munshi was elected to all the sub-committees

The Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights had to recommend what Rights, if any, were to be included in the Constitution, and whether they should be included in the Union Constitution, or the Constitution of the Units It was within this sphere that Munshi conceived the possibility of circumventing the Plan and resurrecting the unity of the country

In the preliminary Draft Constitution, referred to above, Munshi had suggested that there should be common citizenship—a debatable issue at the time—for the whole of the country with freedom of movement, freedom to settle and take up any trade in any part of the country along with equal protection of law for all citizens Once these provisions were incorporated in the Constitution, nothing could disrupt the unity of the country, grouping or no

grouping As a lawyer, it was but natural that Munshi should pin his faith on the judiciary to preserve the liberty of the individual and constitute a standing impersonal counter-check against the grasping tendencies of the Executive

Munshi made a close study of the subject and prepared two notes on Fundamental Rights which contain an elaborate analysis of the various aspects of these Rights as they have passed through the law courts and judicial interpretation in India and other countries Munshi had practical experience of the powerful role of Writs as guardians of liberty and democracy, particularly during the Quit India movement, when he defended victims of the Defence of India Rules in several High Courts in India He had drafted the Constitution of the still-born Union of Southern Maratha States and the Constitution of Mewar promulgated by the Maharana of Udaipur

Munshi realised that a mere enunciation of these Rights and their incorporation in a constitution would not by themselves constitute a guarantee of individual liberty 'Unenforced fundamental rights are no guarantee of individual liberty at all', he writes in one of his Notes and sets out the reason why, in spite of their elaborate enumeration in the Weimar Constitution, the people of Germany lost their liberties

Emphasising the importance of uniformity of Fundamental Rights throughout the Union, and to avoid the repetition of the unfortunate rivalry which divided the States in the U S A due to, for example, differential treatment of problems relating to Slavery or Marriage Laws, Munshi avowed

> Though Clause 20 of the Statement of May 16, contemplates the possibility of distributing Fundamental Rights of citizens between the Union, Groups,

and the Units, Fundamental Rights of citizens of the Union have no value if they differ from Group to Group or from Unit to Unit or are not uniformly enforceable Fundamental Rights and Duties have since World War I been accepted as an indispensable condition of the peaceful progress of the World During World War II it has been accepted as an axiom that world-wide guarantees of the Rights of Man are an essential condition of stable international society They play a great part in preventing single-party dictatorship and in solving the problems of minorities as they remove the danger of a minority forming a State within a State and looking to foreign States for protection But in order to achieve this purpose, rights must be so embedded in the positive law of the country as superior to the powers of any government that they become effective guarantees against the action of the State

The essential conditions for an effective guarantee of Fundamental Rights are —

(a) Enforceability must be the essence of any instrument defining Fundamental Rights and Duties,

(b) A person or a State under an obligation cannot claim the right to determine whether he would comply with the obligation and if so to what extent,

(c) The observance of the Fundamental Rights and Duties must be determined by a procedure and a machinery common to the Union as a whole,

(d) Limitations to such law whenever necessary must only be imposed by the law of the Union

If the Fundamental Rights and Duties have to be legally enforceable, adequate and speedy remedies in the nature of judicial review have to be provided

> As a matter of experience, rights guaranteed by Constitutions like the Weimar Constitution and the Minority Treaties and even by the League of Nations, remained ineffective for want of such remedies On the other hand, the Fundamental Rights in the U S A and the civil liberties in Great Britain have been preserved by reason of two factors (a) an independent judiciary, and (b) the prerogative writs of Habeas Corpus, Mandamus, Prohibition, Certeorari and Quo Warranto

Being a student of the constitutional development and history of India, Munshi supported his views by a reference to the past

> Civil liberties in British India can also be traced ultimately to the fact that the charter of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, the first High Court in the country, drafted by Sir Elija Impey, gave it the wide power of issuing prerogative writs in the like manner as the King's Bench Division in England
>
> In India, however, with the traditions of the King's Bench which the High Courts as Courts of Record have inherited, there has grown up a very strong tradition of these prerogative writs In recent years, these writs (including that of Habeas Corpus under Section 491 of the Cr P C) have been utilised for controlling the arbitrary actions of the executive and quasi-judicial bodies, which are being multiplied under modern Government

The provision for the issuance of these writs was necessary because Munshi felt that

> If writs of the Constitution are not provided, people will have to subject themselves to the loss of valuable rights before the constitutionality of the act of a government is tested in a suit, which might

take years to be finally decided It is also of the highest importance that the question whether a law is valid or not must be decided at the earliest moment Any uncertainty about its validity will lead to great hardships The object of the Fundamental Law will be frustrated if people have to serve sentences, pay fines or deny themselves the privileges given by the Constitution for a long time under an invalid law Without such prompt remedies, election laws may be so narrowed down as to endanger free election and thereby suppress democracy Lastly, if the constitutional rights and the power to punish disobedience of the Court's order in Contempt proceedings are not given by Constitutional Law, the State law may alter the effect of the Fundamental Rights to such an extent as to make them ineffective Without such prompt machinery of enforcement, therefore, the Union and State Governments might conceivably lapse into a programme inimical to freedom

Therefore Munshi insisted that

> The existence of a legal right in the Constitution must necessarily imply a right in the individual to intervene in order to make the legal right effective The writs of Mandamus in its English form, the writs of Prohibition, of Certeorari, Quo Warranto and Habeas Corpus and the power to commit the offenders for contempt of court must therefore appropriately form part of this chapter

Munshi emphasised that these rights should be enforced by the judiciary and that the judiciary should be completely independent of both the executive and the legislature

So the real security of civil liberty lies not in the

Constitution, says Munshi, but in the existence of an independent judiciary Fortunately in India, the High Courts, originally based on the principle of British justice and jurisprudence, stood us in good stead As Munshi points out in his notes, our Courts had in a measure enjoyed the power to issue various writs like the Habeas Corpus, Mandamus, etc

Sir Alladi Krishnaswamy also joined hands with Munshi, though there was some difference as to details Dr B R Ambedkar, then only a member of the Constituent Assembly, was a doughty champion of Fundamental Rights Congressmen, having passed through the fire of political persecution, were generally for them There was practically no opposition in the Advisory Committee, nor in the Assembly until they came to the 'due process' clause, the incorporation of which led to a long controversy

Important considerations weighed with Munshi for his insistence upon these constitutional writs In a parliamentary type of Government, the legislature of the state is supposed to act as a check upon the executive, but in a country like India where there is a strong likelihood of having a single party government, public opinion may remain stifled because the legislature may not be willing to destroy or criticise the executive for fear of damaging its own prospects or the prestige of the party

Secondly, as Munshi writes in his 'Notes', 'in a federation of the sort we are having in India, many unconstitutional acts may be permitted, but for want of a proper remedy the same cannot be declared unconstitutional unless writs are issued by the Courts There are some definite reasons why in a new democratic state, writs are the only foundation of civil liberty In their absence people may have to submit themselves to loss of liberty

etc, and the final decision which the Courts would give might take a long time to give necessary protection to the individual, and as the proverb goes 'justice delayed is justice denied' There is no meaning in allowing a law to remain in force for a long time and then to declare it *ultra vires* As the case of Lady Dowager Petit (47 B L Rept 255) has shown, the object of a fundamental law is frustrated if people have to go to prison or to undergo other punishments and later it is discovered that their suffering was enforced illegally A quick remedy in the nature of writs would therefore go a long way to satisfy the needs of a new democracy where the executive and the legislature have yet to appreciate the democratic way of life'

VIII

While Munshi was successful in his efforts to get many of his ideas incorporated in the Constitution, it does not mean however, he always had his own way He also fought many a battle which he lost, and one such cause dearest to his heart was that of the 'due process' clause for which he fought almost to the end

Munshi always attached great importance to the 'due process' clause of the U S A Constitution, as the greatest bulwark against any encroachment on the individual's liberty Aware of the plethora of interpretations the Courts placed upon it in the U S A and various stages through which its meaning passed, he believed that such a clause was required in India in the context of its special conditions As a member of the Fundamental Rights Sub-Committee, he took the earliest opportunity to get it incorporated in the report and he piloted it in the Consti-

tuent Assembly itself, which at a first sitting accepted it

Then came the appointment of the Drafting Committee to scrutinise and finalise the draft of the Constitution as prepared by the Adviser to the Constituent Assembly, Sir B N Rau The Drafting Committee consisted of the 'Experts' of the Assembly Of the seven members of this Committee, six were from the 'independent' section of the Assembly, though all of them, with the sole exception of Dr B R Ambedkar, owed their membership to the Congress Party There was only one Congressman, Munshi, and hence his importance to represent the Congress viewpoint Dr Ambedkar, who meanwhile became the Law Minister in the Government of India, was appointed Chairman of the Drafting Committee It was during the drafting state that 'due process' was substituted by 'procedure established by law' as an Article borrowed from the Japanese Constitution

Sir B N Rau, the Adviser, visited the U S A at this time and took advantage of the opportunity to consult some experts in that country regarding the provisions to be incorporated in our Constitution Justice Frankfurter of the Supreme Court of America advised Sir B N Rau that the 'due process' clause should be dropped as it really hindered the progress of democracy in that country Sir B N Rau wrote to the members of the Drafting Committee to reconsider the question Sir Alladi who as Advocate-General of Madras had an insight into the difficulties of administration, disliked the 'due process' clause from the beginning The lawless activities of the Communists in Telengana and of other 'anti-social' elements in other parts of India convinced him 'more than ever that all fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution must be subject to public order security and safety' Sardar Patel agreed with Sir Alladi. The happenings in the

country had disillusioned him, especially after the murder of the Mahatma

Backed by the authority of American opinion, most of the members of the Drafting Committee as well as of the Central Cabinet changed their opinion Munshi found himself alone in the Committee, with only Bakshi Tek Chand to support him in the Assembly Dr B R Ambedkar, who speaking earlier on the Objectives Resolution called it halting and inadequate because it did not contain the guarantee of the 'due process' clause, strangely chose to remain neutral at this time Munshi fought valiantly till the end, but the odds were against him In his speech on this clause at the final stage, he told the Assembly plainly how such a safeguard was essential if we wanted to uphold democracy in this country He pointed out how sweeping powers were already being given to the executive in this country in the name of emergency, and, that how unless judicial control was imposed, a tradition might be developed which 'will destroy even whatever little of personal liberty there is in this country'

Munshi said

> We want to set up a democracy, and the House has said it over and over again, and the essence of democracy is that a balance must be struck between individual liberty on the one hand and social control on the other We must not forget that the majority in a legislature is more anxious to establish social control than to serve individual liberty Some scheme, therefore, must be devised to adjust the needs of individual liberty and the demands of social control Eminent American lawyers are agreed on the point that no better scheme could have been evolved to strike a balance between the two Of course, as the House knows, lawyers delight to dis-

agree and there is a certain volume of opinion against it in America, but we have made drastic changes in the American clause (as it stands in our Constitution) in such matters involving personal liberty Government have to go before the Courts and justify the need for passing the legislation under which the person complaining was convicted

I know some honourable members have got a feeling that, in view of the emergent conditions in this country, this clause may lead to disastrous consequences With great respect I have to say that I have not been able to agree with this view My submission is that this clause is necessary, and it is not likely to be abused We have unfortunately, in this country legislatures with large majorities facing very severe problems and, naturally, there is a tendency to pass legislation in a hurry which gives sweeping powers to the executive and the police Now there will be no deterrent if these legislative enactments are not examined by a court of law For instance, I read the other day that there is going to be a legislation, or there is already a legislation in one province, which denies to the accused the assistance of a lawyer How is that going to be checked? In another province, I read that the certificate of report of an executive authority—mind you, it is not a Secretary of a Government but a subordinate executive—is conclusive evidence of a fact This creates tremendous difficulties for the accused and I think, as I have submitted, there must be some agency in a democracy which strikes a balance between individual liberty and social control Our emergency at the moment has perhaps led us to forget that if we do not give scope to individual liberty, and give it

> the protection of the courts, we will create a tradition which will ultimately destroy even whatever little of personal liberty there is in this country

It required great courage to say these words in the face of such strong opposition The country could not have chosen a better champion of their safety and liberty than Munshi

The Fundamental Right as regards property brought out conflicting views There were many in the Assembly including Pandit Nehru himself who wanted to give a free hand to the future Parliament to deal with private property as it suited national interests from time to time There were many others, which included the powerful Sardar himself, who were not prepared to trust popular passions of the day in this matter And this almost resulted in a stalemate, the controversy ranging over two questions whether the right to compensation should be incorporated in the constitution, and whether the Judiciary should be the judge of its equitableness

At one stage, the Congress Party was split equally on this question, and it is reported that on one occasion, Dr John Mathai, then Finance Minister, threatened resignation if the safeguards as to compensation were not made justiciable Munshi had to spend much of his energy in convassing for a compromise, and the Assembly finally accepted a judicial review He made a passionate speech in the Assembly, appealed to the members to take a realistic view of the clause, and reminded them how even the Congress Party had made certain promises regarding private property, and how principles should be made dependent upon circumstances He said

> We cannot, Sir, go back upon the decisions of this House, nor upon the pledge of the Congress Party nor upon the pledge of the Government We

have by the election manifesto of 1945 promised equitable compensation to the Zamindars Parliament—inspite of what has been said about justiciability and particularly against the tribe of lawyers more than once—is the sole judge of the two matters First, it is the sole judge of the propriety of the principles laid down, so long as they are principles Secondly, it has been authoritatively laid down that principles may vary as regards different classes of property and different objects for which they are acquired Parliament is therefore the judge and master of deciding what principles to apply in each case

Principles are not rigid canons to be applied mechanically They have to be formulated in the light of the circumstances of each situation, in the light of the reforms sought to be carried out, in the light of the purposes for which the property is acquired The Parliament is the sole judge in each case as to what is fair and equitable and whether the principles laid down are calculated to yield compensation fair and equitable in the light of such circumstances

The question of justiciability, I fear, has been unnecessarily brought into this controversy In a civilised country, every article of the written constitution if there is one, and every law made by the Parliament is justiciable in the sense that the Courts can examine each of them to decide that the law-making authority acted within the ambit of its powers and to ascertain the meaning and effects of its provisions Even if you use the words 'compensation shall not be questioned in Courts', the Courts will have a right to adjudicate upon what the mean-

ing of 'questioned in courts' is whether the thing questioned is compensation at all, whether in law the legislature was acquiring property for compensation. Let there be no mistake: unless you revert to the tribal law where the word of the tribal chief is the last word, you cannot escape the tribe of lawyers. But one thing is clear. The rule of the tribe of lawyers is any day better than the rule of the tribe of tyrants.

The right has since been withheld due partly in the interest of land reform, mainly due to an unconscious drift, a socialistic drift towards conceding more powers to the state, which in effect means the party in power.

IX

The Minorities Committee had to jump over several hurdles. The religious and communal minorities had been converted by the policies of the British into a sort of vested interests, and, after Sardar, who was the Chairman, the most important part was played by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and Munshi.

Sardar Patel, the Chairman of the Minorities Committee, had a broad vision as regards the minorities. While he accepted that the interests of the minorities should be safeguarded, he declined to set them so that the progress of the majority should be hampered in developing national strength. As one of the minority leaders testified in the debate, he was always 'generous to the minorities.' He was the most powerful man in the Congress, and Munshi enjoyed the confidence of Sardar in ample measure. Sardar as a hard-headed politician and a patriot, and Munshi as a student of history and a legatee of that emotional

worship of the Motherland which he inherited from his early association with Sri Aurobindo, alike realised that the destiny of the country lay in its being united and strong

Munshi has ever been a true friend of the minorities As a lawyer and a statesman, he believed in a secular State, which to him was not a 'godless' state, but a State in which religious freedom was assured and all respected the religion of everyone It is this catholicity about him that won him the confidence of the minorities and enabled him to negotiate successfully with all shades of opinion and persuade them to give up their separatist attitude and finally to agree to joint electorates without reservation of seats It was a great achievement and in all this, though Sardar was the force behind, the negotiating skill was Munshi's There was powerful opposition from strange and unexpected quarters—it is an interesting story which Munshi alone can reveal one day—but neither Sardar nor Munshi relaxed their efforts till the minorities willingly gave up their mental reservations

Munshi's own impressions, as described in his notes, are worth reproducing

> The strain of Minorities Committee was sometimes beyond endurance Whatever little training I had in bringing about consent decrees in courts between cantankerous litigants came in handy, for no two parties were prepared to give up easily the vested interests created by the British In the tiring negotiations, what helped most was the confidence which Sardar showed by leaving the manoeuvres to me Whenever any matter under discussion went up to him, I could always rely upon his backing me up
>
> In the somewhat acrimonious discussion I was inclined to be a little emphatic—at times even over-

emphatic But the most valuable contribution was made by Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant, who, whenever the atmosphere became tense or irritating, brought down the temperature of the debate by his inimitable persuasiveness

In the Minorities Committee, persuasiveness in public debates, however was of limited use The late Dr H C Mookerjee, later the Governor of West Bengal, was the foremost among those who helped The Christian community, he said, wanted no special privileges as a minority, it wanted the nation to be one which joint electorates alone will bring In the beginning, some of the representatives of that community did not like the attitude, but his forthright sincerity won in the end

Apart from the Congress Sikhs who were quite willing to leave the matter in the hands of Sardar, Sardar Ujjal Singh as regards the Sikhs was helpful In the earlier stages it was decided that the claim of the Sikhs should be taken up last, for some of the representatives wanted to know what rights were being conceded to the Muslims There was some move among the Parsis to claim some special privileges, but Sir Homi Mody came to the rescue and declined to have any special privileges for the community

The battle began when Dr B R Ambedkar fought to secure a privileged position for the so-called scheduled classes The debate was acrimonious, Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and I fighting him step by step We made it clear that we recognised the special difficulties of the Harijans that we were determined to remove their disabilities in the interests of the nation as a whole We were,

therefore, anxious that certain privileges might be granted which would make it easy to consolidate the Hindu community We, however, fought every suggestion which would continue to maintain a perpetual rift between the two sections Our view prevailed in the House Everyone had sympathy for the reasonable demands of Harijans and the provisions in the Constitution as they ultimately emerged were the outcome of the broad attitude of Congressmen in the Constituent Assembly.

Frank Anthony led a brave fight on behalf of the Anglo-Indian community He had been one of the first to lead that community towards nationalism, but it had enjoyed a privileged position in the days of the British And bravely he fought At one stage he almost broke down by emotion Ultimately, a Sub-Committee was appointed As Pantji could not attend, I acted as its Chairman After considerable negotiations, a happy solution was found

Then the question of Muslims was taken up The Nationalist Muslims, at one stage, favoured some kind of reservation It was a very difficult situation, but if once reservations were conceded to Muslims, there would be no end to similar claims by others When discussing the Muslim claim, we had to pass through anxious moments Tajammul Hussain from Bihar and Begum Aizaz Rasool from Uttar Pradesh were against any reservation for their community The former was boldness itself, the Begum, once an ardent Muslim Leaguer, was nervous Both put forward the view that Pakistan having been formed, there was no reason why the Muslims by securing reserved seats should stand away from the general community, that any such attempt would harm the

community, that the best interests of the Muslims lay in their complete identification with the general masses of the people, that if this were not done, the Muslims will again develop a separatist outlook and the Hindus will develop a still greater distrust of the Muslims In the interest of the nation, therefore, there should be no separate electorates

Sardar postponed the meeting There were behind-the-scene negotiations, and when the Minorities Committee met again, Tajamal Hussain having gone abroad, the Begum was too nervous and afraid to face the wrath of her co-religionists But she gathered courage to propose joint electorates and the House, with a unanimous voice, accepted joint electorates.

Thus was laid the ghost of the 'Divide and Rule' policy of the British Once the Muslims agreed to joint electorates, there was a general atmosphere of goodwill The Sikh representatives were very reasonable The Chairman, in winding up, pleaded that minorities should no longer look to any external authority to assist them They should depend only on the good sense of their own countrymen And the Minorities Committee ended as a great triumph for the national outlook

X

In any federal Constitution, the judiciary plays the most important role as the protector of the rights of the citizens, as the guardian and interpreter of the Constitution and, finally, as the important force behind the contractual agreement implied in the nature of the Constitu-

tion The structure and powers of the Federal Court instituted under the Government of India Act, 1935 had to be modified to suit the changed conditions created by independence

In this important work, Munshi played a leading role, though Sir Alladi was his colleague on the Committee Alladi at first took a legalistic view of the jurisdiction of the proposed Supreme Court of India, and doubted whether our Supreme Court should have wide powers In his note on the functions of the Supreme Court, Alladi stated

> So far as the Supreme Court is to be instituted only on the strength of the implied power under the Cabinet Mission's scheme, its functions must be very limited It will be natural to imply a tribunal to decide on the constitutional validity of laws, but it is doubtful if the implications can be carried much farther

Munshi's note, on the other hand, cut through legalistic difficulties He said

> As India is going to have a federal form of Government, people will have to live under the concurrent jurisdiction of the Union and the Unit, obeying each in some things The Supreme Court, like the one in the U S A , therefore, must be in an authoritative position to determine the limits of this sovereignty
>
> So far as its constitutional functions are concerned, these functions should not be merely constructing the constitution but co-ordinating the law, firstly, in the light of fundamental rights and secondly, by the 'due process' clause
>
> The Switzerland Federal Tribunal hears appeals from Cantonal Tribunals in all important civil cases,



Munshi and Charles S Brannan U S Secretary for Agriculture at the F A O Conference of the U N Rome 1951



The Indian delegation to the F A O Conference of the U N Rome 1951



Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant and Munshi at a party in Lucknow 1954



Russian Premier Marshal Bulganin, Munshi and Communist Party Chief Nikita Khruschev, 1955

Though in the U S A, no such general power is conferred upon the Supreme Court, it exercises through the 'due process' clause great influence over ordinary law Personally I would prefer this indirect method to be supplemented by the direct method

The Supreme Court in certain matters must have original jurisdiction cf Art III Cl 2 of the U S A Constitution

The next question is of federal courts If it is accepted that the Supreme Court should also be a final court of appeal from the High Courts of the Units there need not be anything like the system of federal courts as in vogue in the U S A and permissible under the Australian Constitution

With the growth of democratic government with giant majorities behind them, there will always be a tendency to destroy the independence of the High Courts Many of the States that will join the Union will not necessarily have a High Court of the strength and independence as in the British Units It must also not be forgotten that with the establishment of the Union and the Supreme Court, the best forensic talents in the country would be drawn to the Centre Some provision, therefore, will have to be made which will enable the Supreme Court to have some controlling power to secure the independence of the High Courts

I also value what I may call the political role of the Supreme Court in India Once the units with provincial autonomy are established and linguistic provinces formed, there would naturally arise a tendency for these units to evolve on the lines of petty Nation States The only preventive to such an attempt is, first and foremost the influence of the

> Supreme Court as a unifying agency The Union Government would no doubt exercise a variety of influences political and financial But the unconscious process of consolidation which a uniformity of laws and interpretations involves makes the unifying unconscious and therefore more stable

The Committee ultimately decided to take the broadest view of the powers and jurisdiction of the Supreme Court

XI

Munshi's greatest contribution to the Constitution was towards having a strong centre As a keen student of the history of India, he had for years realised the need of maintaining India's unity and strength at the Centre The greatest service which the British rendered to India, as he said in many of his writings, was to give a unitary and powerful central government He had also seen and commented upon how the Congress refusal to work the Federal part of the Government of India Act of 1935 had ended in the partition of the country He says, in his historical studies, how medieval particularism has still a hold on the people, expressing itself in provincialism, regionalism and linguism And no other country in the world had been invaded and conquered by outsiders so many times as India Here is what he said in the Assembly in reply to those who expressed regret that the Constitution did not tend more towards provincial autonomy

> I warn the members of one supreme fact of history that the glorious days of India were the only days whether under the Mauryas or the Moghuls when there was a strong central authority in the

country and the most tragic days were when the central authority in the country was dismembered by the provinces trying to resist it We do not want to repeat that fact

Munshi was in a position to influence the course of Constitution-making in favour of a strong centre with plenary powers By the time the Committee appointed by the Constituent Assembly to recommend Model Constitutions for the Provinces and for the Centre, on both of which Munshi was one of the most active members, had submitted their reports, the Committee on Union Powers presided over by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had already enlarged the scope of the Union Powers included in the Union List Still the 'poison of provincial autonomy' had already entered deep into the provisions of the Constitution and Munshi's notes show his ceaseless efforts to neutralise them It was not an easy task There were many protagonists of provincial autonomy in the Assembly As soon as the shackles of the Cabinet Mission Plan' were gone, the Union Powers Committee, of which he was an active member also submitted a supplementary list of powers, and in an introductory note to the Report, the Committee expressed

> The severe limitation on the scope of the central authority in the Cabinet Mission's Plan was a compromise accepted by the Assembly much against its judgment of the administrative needs of the country in order to accommodate the Muslim League Now that the partition is a settled fact, we are unanimously of the view that it would be injurious to the interests of the country to provide for a weak central authority which would be incapable of ensuring peace of co-ordinating vital matters of com-

Supreme Court as a unifying agency The Union Government would no doubt exercise a variety of influences, political and financial But the unconscious process of consolidation which a uniformity of laws and interpretations involves makes the unifying unconscious and therefore more stable

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mon concern and of speaking effectively for the whole country in the international sphere

Another point on which Munshi differed from some of his colleagues in the Union Constitution Committee was as regards the manner in which the President of the Union was to be elected The majority were in favour of the President being elected by Parliament Munshi was opposed to the President being so elected as he would be no more than a nominee of the Party in power, that is of the Prime Minister It was unwise, he argued, to build upon the fact that India at the time possessed a single party Government The Congress Party might split into fragments Governments might become unstable; coalition Governments with fluctuating loyalties might come into existence, and make the Centre so weak as to be overwhelmed by a combine of the Provinces or by some external agency Munshi dissented from the majority view and raised the issue before the joint meeting of the Union and the Provincial Constitution Committees which had been convened to co-ordinate their respective reports Munshi made a strong plea, quoting the bitter experience of France His view that President should be elected by universal franchise was welcomed But the majority members of the Union Committee, led by Nehru, were strongly opposed to the view Ultimately Sir Gopalaswamy Ayyangar evolved the compromise formula now embodied in Article 54, by which the President was to be elected by the members of all the legislatures in the Union, both Central and State

Of the many provisions regarding provincial autonomy, one that attracted Munshi's attention was the provision concerning the State Governors The Model Provincial Constitution Committee suggested the appointment of a Governor by election on adult franchise or by a panel system under which the legislature would choose three

names out of which the President would select one In either case, the Governor would be a man of the province, he would only be a representative of the province but not of India as a whole Both the features would strengthen regional loyalties and affect the strength of the Centre and the unity of the country. The problem baffled solution for sometime, the idea of a nominated Governor was mooted, and Munshi strongly pressed for it He was not one of those who believed that the Governor was to be a mere puppet or figure-head Here is what he said about the position of the provincial Governor

> The Governor is not necessarily to be a cipher as some Members said, nor need he be only a super-host giving lunches and dinners to persons in society He has a political function to perform and that political function is to be the constitutional head
>
> The new Governor has no power except as a constitutional head He is going to be nominated by the Centre He is going to be a detached spectator of what is going on in the province His function is to maintain the dignity, the stability and the collective responsibility of his Government Now, in that limited sphere, he can exercise some influence

The second provision which received Munshi's passionate support related to 'Emergency'. This was again a difficult step Nobody wanted to resurrect Sec. 93 of the Government of India Act of 1935 This Sec 93 was considered by many as undemocratic and contrary to principles of responsible government Munshi, on the other hand, wanted that the Centre should have some power whereby it could step into the provincial sphere to tide over any emergencies whether connected with law and order, or a constitutional impasse or an external emergency Hence he introduced an amendment to the original

provision in the Report of the Provincial Constitution which finally and inevitably led to the Article 356 taking shape as it stands to-day in the Constitution, whereby the President either on the report of the Governor or on his own initiative can suspend the State's normal machinery of government and take over the administration.

Sir Alladi and Munshi also succeeded in introducing another clause (Article 354) whereby a 'duty' has been cast on the Centre to see that the Government of a State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution

Between 1944 and 1950 many things had happened which convinced the framers of the Constitution that wide emergency powers are absolutely necessary and will not be unjustifiable so long as the Parliament has the right to approve of their exercise The 'emergency' clauses (Article 352 and Article 356) have made the country only politically united, but the Drafting Committee was far-sighted enough to see that mere political unity is not enough, and that the unity of the country really implies more or less unified economy It might happen that a particular State or a group of States might pursue an economic policy which would run counter to the policy followed by the Centre and the rest of India, thus disrupting the economic progress of the country The Centre must have the power to enforce a co-ordinated economic policy throughout the country Article 360, providing for a Financial Emergency', was hit upon thereafter largely as a result of the efforts of Munshi This is what he said about this provision

> This article in the constitution is the realisation of one supreme fact that the economic structure of the country is one and indivisible—Different articles already passed provide that there will be certain

amount of integration between the Centre and the provinces When for instance internal disturbances threaten any part of the country, the Centre can interfere by emergency legislation The object of this measure is patent, that the financial stability of India must be maintained at any cost and under all circumstances

XII

Whether a country has a strong unitary constitution or not depends largely upon the powers the Centre enjoys, and therefore Munshi from the very beginning concentrated on a study of this problem of distribution of functions between the Centre and the units Throughout the days when the Schedule VII of the Constitution was under discussion in the Assembly, Munshi was very active and introduced more and more items to enlarge the sphere of central administration

It would be difficult to assess in full his contribution to the Schedule VII Mention, may however be made of one item which has far-reaching effects. One of the weak provisions of the Constitution is the one dealing with education, which is largely left to the States When we are setting up a new democratic set up which requires a new constitutional morality on the part of the citizens, there is an imperative need to educate the citizens, specially to think in terms of all-India unity This was completely ignored by the Constitution-makers with the result that this provision along with the rights to education in the mother tongue and regional language has not only resulted in different standards of education in different regions but has allowed separatist tendencies to grow up encouraged

by different states and Universities Munshi alone seems to have realised it, for he fought hard for the inclusion of University Education in the Concurrent List but succeeded in his efforts to some extent only with the active support of Maulana Azad He had the prophetic vision to see the new enemy of India, Linguism as he has christened it, and wanted by all means to preserve India's basic unity

There was considerable divergence of opinion among the members of the Constituent Assembly about the official language of the Union There were three schools of thought The first comprised Hindi enthusiasts who urged that Hindi should be introduced not only as the official language of the Union, but even in the High Courts straightaway Diametrically opposed to them were the representatives from the South who wanted to retain English as it was before 1947, leaving Hindi to be studied as a second language promoted in easy stages into an official language The third group wanted that English should be replaced by Hindi as and when Hindi was ready to perform in some measure the functions then performed by English

Dr Pattabhi Sitaramayya, then Congress President, was keeping indifferent health and Munshi was chosen to officiate for him as the Chairman of the Congress Party in the Constituent Assembly The party meetings were stormy ones and there was considerable heat in the debates on this subject Munshi had to use all his tact and persuasiveness to prevent an open breach between the Hindi enthusiasts and the members from South India Munshi had all along been a lover of Hindi, but as a realist he knew that English could not be replaced so easily Ultimately he and some of his friends were able to evolve a compromise, then known as Munshi-Gopalaswami formula, by which the Constituent Assembly while accepting Hindi

as the official language of the Union fixed a period of 15 years for replacing English by Hindi for official purposes of the Union in terms of Part XVII of the Constitution

In the great process of framing the constitution of the largest democracy in the world, Munshi played an important and conspicuous part, taking continuous interest from the very beginning till the end It always happens in all democratic set-ups in the efforts of large assemblies that all great ideas must come from some individual brain, and behind many of the ideas enshrined in the constitution lay Munshi's fertile brain Future history of India would record to what extent Munshi was right in his ideas But he would always be remembered for the valiant fight he put up for a strong and united India and a strong Centre and he is assured of a permanent place among the Fathers of the Constitution

CHAPTER IX

MINISTER OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

I

It was in February 1950 that K M Munshi took over charge of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture at New Delhi He remained in charge of the Ministry until May 1952 His tenure at the Ministry thus lasted for only twenty-eight months, which seems such a short time to have achieved so much The allocation of the Food and Agriculture portfolio to Munshi came as a great surprise to the public At that time, the Ministry of Commerce was also vacant and it was thought that with Munshi's legal acumen and long experience of commercial litigation, he was the obvious choice for the Commerce portfolio His appointment as Minister of Education would have been easily understandable because of his close connection with literature, art, culture and history The Ministry of Law would have been appropriate for him in view of his intimate connection with the drafting of the Constitution and his eminent position at the Bar When, instead of any of these portfolios for which he was abundantly qualified by previous experience he was allotted the portfolio of Food and Agriculture, for which he had no obvious qualification it gave scope for considerable witticism at his expense in certain quarters It was said that the portfolio of Food and Agriculture was one in which reputations were lost rather than gained and that its allocation to Munshi was designed to curb his impetuosity and contain him within customary bounds It was also said that no one was found willing to take over the portfolio and that he was imported as a last resort The record of Munshi's monumental

achievements during the brief period that he held charge stand out therefore all the more vividly when set against the expectations formed the scepticism displayed and the situation in which the Food Ministry was at the time of his appointment

It was the time when the Food and Agriculture Ministries of the Government of India were coming in for a lot of criticism The food situation had been changing for the worse during the previous few years as a result of the increasing population pressure on the limited cereal production The partition of the country, involving the loss of the fertile areas of West Punjab and Sind had further accentuated the problem India was deficit not only in food but also in cotton and jute The imports of food grains had amounted to 2 8 million tons in 1949-50, the corresponding imports of cotton being 9 lakh bales and jute 13 5 lakh bales The drain on foreign exchange resources amounted to about Rs 193 crores

The Grow More Food Campaign had been first launched during World War II as an *ad hoc* measure The G M F schemes were being formulated year after year, but there was a general feeling that they had failed to yield results The demand from the State Governments for larger food allocations remained unabated and as a result, imports continued on a large scale. A development plan had been put into operation for jute since 1948-49, but the increase in production fell far short of requirements The cotton and jute industries of India were at the mercy of Pakistan unless the internal production of jute and cotton could be increased Such increase, however, could only come in the short period through the diversion of area from foodgrains

The administration was spread over two sprawling Ministries—the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry

of Food The Ministry of Agriculture besides was not one Ministry but many Ministries in one—'a bundle of serpents'—according to the Gujarati idiom used by Munshi It consisted of a group of unco-ordinated sub-departments, conspicuous for lack of unity and group action The production campaigns for food, cotton and jute were rival activities and not an integrated one Forestry, animal husbandry and agriculture were dealt with independently of one another Research work done in the laboratories hardly benefited the farmers for whom it was intended In the name of 'reform', zamindari abolition was being enforced with such haste that millions of acres of land were being rendered fallow Many of the departments of the Ministry showed conservatism and hesitancy in the disposal of various issues, not to speak of bringing about reforms and improvements

Such was the position when Munshi took over office The position was continuously deteriorating and drastic measures were necessary if further deterioration was to be prevented There was continuous and bitter criticism of the Food and Agriculture administration Some of the criticisms were due to lack of knowledge of the magnitude of the problems and the nature of the difficulties There was need for creating a sense of urgency so that all concerned should realize that there was a crisis on hand, view the position in the right perspective and take appropriate measures to meet it

Immediately on taking office, Munshi with characteristic impetuosity imparted a new vigour to the Ministry On the first day he took charge he addressed the staff of the ministries Commenting on a file which had a note extending over ten or fifteen pages, he made the characteristic remark

In one of the files which I came across today, I found elaborate notes extending over pages. I give you notice that unless it is a question involving policy, any note which is longer than twenty lines will not be read by the Minister. I would like the officers to come with the Secretary and meet me and discuss the matter orally. Your energies should be saved for action, not spent in academic nothing.

In a few days the new Minister broke the official barrier which prevented the heads of the department from having direct access to the Minister. He laid down the revolutionary practice that where the head of the department is wanted for any particular purpose, he should see him directly but should invariably keep the Secretary informed of it. This had a two-fold effect. Firstly, it emboldened the heads of the departments to put forward their schemes before the Minister without reserve and know his mind about it. Secondly, it enabled the Minister to establish personal relations with them, instilling in them a confidence born of personal relationship in carrying out their duties. Munshi's informal way of meeting the officials at different levels also created an enthusiastic desire to fulfil his wishes.

Munshi worked practically the whole day and till 10-30 at night and was accessible to the officers at all hours of the day. He also insisted upon being attended to at odd hours. But scarcely anyone grudged it, for his enthusiasm was infectious. On the one hand, the officers felt a sense of identity with the Minister which they had not before, on the other, they were put on their mettle. An interesting episode might illustrate the way he drove the Ministry forward. After his return from Bihar, which was then passing through acute dstress, he called a conference of the senior officers and gave instructions for a plan to meet the emergency. He talked in terms of a military campaign,

of foodgrains being rushed of wagons being requisitioned, of railway bottlenecks being overcome immediately A very senior officer expressed the impossibility of moving at that rapidity Munshi exploded in a manner to which senior I C S officers were not accustomed The officer concerned felt deeply hurt Immediately afterwards Munshi wrote him a letter of profuse apology for his exhibition of temper but reminded him that 'we have to pull Bihar out of the difficulty ' The Ministry like one man stood by him in those difficult times

II

Munshi's term as Food and Agriculture Minister was characterised by two very bad years during which the world situation, nature, locusts and other adverse factors combined to create conditions nearing famine in various parts of the country The immediate problem was to pool all available resources to ward off famine, starvation and death The effect of natural calamities was most pronounced in the case of Bihar and the critical food situation that had developed there claimed the immediate attention of the people and the Government The history of the Bengal Famine of 1942 was not repeated only because of the spectacular manner in which Munshi handled the situation

A succession of calamities over-took the country soon after Munshi took over office In the middle of June 1950 there were excessive rains in Bihar, followed by floods which seriously damaged the maize crop in the north Gangetic belt The outbreak of the Korean War created panic The prices of cereals went up To add to the difficulties floods came in West Bengal in June and in Orissa,

in July August. These were followed by an earth-quake in Assam. The earth-quake shocks blocked the flow of the rivers and resulted in floods causing severe damage to the standing rice crop. From a surplus State, Assam became a deficit State. Difficulties were also experienced in eastern U.P., Punjab, Pepsu, Orissa and Hyderabad.

It was expected that with the arrival of the new crop in the market in October, there would be an easing of the position. This expectation however did not materialise. The autumn rains which were expected to ripen the *kharif* crop failed.

The first half of 1951 too was a lean period and a prolonged spell of draught extending in the eastern direction from Saurashtra to the South Punjab started in the third week of August 1951. Apart from the loss of food-grains, there was an acute scarcity of fodder and drinking water in the affected areas. The long awaited rains came in November which somewhat marred the prospects of late *rabi* sowing in northern and western India but the North-East rains failed in Madras for the fifth successive year, and also in Hyderabad, leading to scarcity of food-grains and water in these States, particularly in Rayala-seema region.

Such was the tale of woe of the years 1950 and 1951 when Munshi was at the helm of affairs in Food and Agriculture Ministry. Naturally, Munshi came in for a lot of blame for the situation prevailing in the country. There were panicky men both inside Parliament and outside who were spreading all kinds of news. In reply to critics Munshi said in Parliament: "The only test should be: Has the Government done its best to meet the situation with the resources it possesses?"

The Central Government was responsible for providing adequate quantities of foodgrains to the State Govern-

ments but could only do so through procurement within the country or imports from abroad There are always limitations in procuring additional quantities from within, even if the tempo of production was high, there was therefore little to be expected by way of procurement when production had actually suffered due to natural calamities

Neither could imports be increased overnight Imports had been planned on the basis of excessive optimism in the achievements of the Grow-More-Food Campaign, and an idealistic decision to stop all imports from abroad by the end of 1951 Thus, for the year 1950, imports had been rigidly planned at 1 2 million tons and contracts had been entered into only for a smaller quantity

Munshi was faced with the problem first, of securing an upward revision of the import target and then, of arranging for the procurement of increased quantities from abroad For this purpose, Munshi had to struggle with the Finance Ministry for securing adequate foreign exchange, with the exporting countries for releasing foodgrains and with countries with shipping facilities for allocating shipping space

Munshi pleaded with C D Deshmukh, the Finance Minister, for adequate foreign exchange for importing foodgrains He emphasised that food is such an important item in the economy of the country that we must get it even if other supplies are cut down or some risk is taken in regard to our balance of payment position

Munshi desiring to leave no stone unturned, sought also the support of Rajaji, who was the Chairman of the Economic Sub-Committee of the Cabinet

The import of grain at short notice from abroad was a matter of great difficulty since the contracts had not been made in time and prices had gone up as a result of the Korean war Munshi procured foodgrains from every

nook and corner of the world. Two barter agreements were concluded during 1950. The agreement with Argentina covered an exchange of 70,000 tons of jute goods with 546,000 metric tons of wheat while that with Egypt covered an exchange of 13,050 tons of jute goods with 60,000 metric tons of rice. In August 1950 U.S.A. agreed to sell to India 427,000 tons milo at a concessional price of $1.40 per 100 lbs. compared to the market price of nearly $2 per 100 lbs. Four agreements were reached with China for the supply of 5.2 lakh metric tons of foodgrains and Munshi sent one of his Joint Secretaries to China for negotiating the deal. A contract covering one lakh tons of wheat was signed with Russia. A long term treaty with Burma was negotiated personally by Munshi who went to Burma for the purpose. Under this treaty 2.4 lakh tons of rice were promised from Burma on Government account and another 1.1 lakh tons on trade account during 1951 and imports for the years 1952-55 were assured at the rate of 3.5 lakh tons a year. The U.K. were persuaded to release 42 thousand tons of wheat out of their own supplies. Foodgrains were also imported from Ceylon, Thailand, Viet-Nam, Canada, Australia and other countries. Pakistan agreed to supply 1.8 lakh tons of foodgrains upto June 30, 1951, 1.4 lakh tons upto December 31, 1951 and 4.5 lakh tons upto October 31, 1952.

The quantities which India could purchase as stipulated in the International Wheat Agreement were also increased from 10 lakh metric tons to 15 lakh metric tons. As a result of this, the country could obtain her guaranteed purchases of wheat at prices cheaper than in the open market.

The outstanding achievement of Munshi in this field was, however, his successful negotiations with the U.S.

Government for *ad hoc* assistance to the extent of two million tons of wheat It was a very uphill task There had been a slight coldness between India and U S A as regards the manner in which foodgrains were to be asked for and given There were several members of the American Senate, who were very critical of India and did not want to help her Certain countries hostile to India were also making strenuous efforts to prevent the Wheat Loan being granted to India Indian opinion had also become touchy on the point Inspite of these difficulties, Munshi worked patiently for several weeks and success crowned his effort

In June 1951, the U S Government passed the Indian Emergency Food Aid Act, under which U S A agreed to lend to India $190 million on a long term basis to enable her to buy two million tons of grain from U S A Of these two million tons, 1 million tons of wheat and 0 05 million tons of milo were received in 1951

The hurdle of shipping facilities, however, provided the greatest difficulty The outbreak of the Korean War increased the demand on sea transport By September 1950, freight rates rose sharply by 60 per cent to 140 per cent and there was an acute shortage of tonnage

The catastrophe was averted by the successful negotiations carried on by Munshi with various countries, and in particular with the U K and the U.S A The British Government used its good offices with the U K Shipping Chamber and the Baltic Exchange Chartering Committee The U S Government also released ships from their 'mothball fleet The question of purchasing a few ships for bringing foodgrains from abroad was considered and a Plan formulated, but it had to be given up for various reasons In all, during 1950 a total number of 392 ships arrived in India with foodgrains from abroad, for which Rs 8 4 crores were paid as net freight During 1951, the

number of ships was 600 and the freight paid Rs 40 crores

As a result of all these measures the food situation though critical did not turn into famine The tale of woe was not allowed to end in tragedy

III

It was a strange irony of fate that Munshi who was a strong votary of decontrol, should have found himself in a position where he had to support the intensification of the existing measures of control In the year 1947-48, when Mahatma Gandhi had insisted on decontrol, Munshi at his instance prepared a note setting out his views in favour of decontrol Even when he took office there was a sharp difference of opinion Sardar was of the view that the controls were doing more harm than good But even he could not persuade Munshi to embark on a policy of decontrol Munshi was, however never a rigid doctrinaire on any issue affecting economic policy The following extract from his speech in reply to the Food debate in Parliament on April 7, 1951 will give a clear idea of his approach to such problems

> Now, I have been charged with having changed my views after I became a Member of Government I assure you that I am not wedded to any doctrine, either of control or of decontrol It has not been quite a pleasure, nor a source of happiness or luxury to have taken up this portfolio I thought it was a national challenge in that spirit I took it and I felt and feel that we cannot do at the present moment without controls It is no use thinking what I would have said or done in 1948, if I had been there We

have to deal with the position as it is We have got to carry the country through enormous difficulties with regard to food, with as little disaster as possible

The policy of control was continued and even stiffened under the pressure of a combination of circumstances There was a clear shortage of food in the country The food crops had suffered considerably during 1950-51 as a result of natural calamities The outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, had made imports costly and uncertain The difficulty of shipping space had increased the difficulty of obtaining foodgrains from other countries Any relaxation of controls at such a time might have led to a steep rise in prices

Munshi, however, was all the time anxious to experiment with some sort of relaxation of controls and decided to make a beginning with gram Punjab, Uttar Pradesh Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan were the only surplus States in gram, the rest of the country being deficit In 1950, gram was being sold at about Rs 9/- to Rs 11/- per maund in the Punjab and Rajasthan, while the price in Bombay was about Rs 30/- and in Madras Rs 60/- The surplus States had not only refused to give anything for the deficit areas but the Punjab had even put forward a demand of 25,000 tons for itself It was not merely a matter of human consumption, even horses could not be supplied with gram and they would not eat milo or jowar For two or three months, Munshi begged of the surplus States to release at least a little quantity for the horses in other States, but received no response The basic plan could not be maintained without a surplus In August, 1950, therefore, gram was decontrolled, but a ceiling price was fixed at Rs 12/- per maund in the surplus areas and Rs 16/- in the deficit areas

The decontrol proved very helpful to the country. About 3,00,000 tons are estimated to have come out of the States surplus in grains into deficit States In the matter of price also the deficit States were benefited On the eve of decontrol, the price of gram in deficit areas was as high as Rs 35/ in Bombay Rs 45/- in Ahmedabad and Rs 60/- in Madras As a result of decontrol, gram was available almost throughout the country for Rs 16/- to Rs 19/-. In effect, gram became a supplementary food at the disposal of the whole of India, relieving the strain on cereals considerably For instance the Bihar Government claimed that the decontrol of gram saved the situation in Bihar by a free flow of about 50 000 tons into the State

It may be added that surplus gram of Punjab fed the famine areas of Bihar because Munshi arranged with the Railway Ministry to give priority to wagons despatched to Bihar In view of the good crop of 1950-51, the ceiling fixed for gram was reduced by Re 1/- with effect from the 30th March 1951, and decontrol was maintained. Surplus States, however, began to clamour for control, because it enabled them to feed their own people at low prices Munshi argued against control

Despite Munshi's opposition, however, control was re-imposed on gram with effect from 10th May, 1951, at the instance of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan As a result, prices went up and there was little procurement from the surplus States The control was subsequently withdrawn in June, 1952

The second commodity Munshi selected for experimenting with decontrol was sugar At the time, the Cabinet had decided to bring *gur* and *khandsari* under control, in addition to sugar, in order to make the control on sugar more effective and to enforce licensing of *kohlus*. The latter could not be enforced effectively and the policy

was already proving difficult to implement At the instance of Munshi, the whole question was re-examined and his policy of 'Selective Control', was adopted by the Government This policy provided for the withdrawal of licensing of *kohlus* and the adoption of a two-price system for sugar. The controlled price was to operate only in respect of the quantity procured by the Government for distribution through ration shops and this quantity was fixed at 10 lakh tons The factories were left free to market any production in excess of this quantity in the open market without restriction of price. The policy provided the consumer with a minimum ration at a controlled price and, at the same time, provided the producer with a powerful incentive for maximum production

As a result of this policy, production increased from 9.8 lakh tons in 1949-50 to 11.2 lakh tons in 1950-51 The stocks with the factories also increased *pari passu* The consumer was happy as he was able to get his ration at controlled prices and could supplement it with additional quantities obtained in the open market The producer was happy as his surplus produce could now be sold openly at higher prices without the stigma of a black market The policy yielded additional revenues to the Central and State Governments through the excise duties levied on the increased production The policy was continued during 1951-52 and yielded even better results The production of sugar reached a figure of 15 lakh tons, which at that time was an all-time record in the history of the Indian sugar industry As a result of the increased production of sugar, the prices of gur, crystal sugar, and *khandsari* tended to decline The stocks of sugar with the factories increased The controls over the price, movement and distribution of sugar were eventually removed

Encouraged by the success of his experiments with gram and sugar Munshi applied his mind to cotton He apprehended that the shortage of cotton coupled with a price ceiling for it was bound to lead to the mixing of inferior varieties with superior varieties and reduce the production of the latter This would make it impossible for the Government to fulfil its obligation to supply cotton to the mills in adequate quantities at reasonable prices The existing controls had not kept down prices of cloth The total production of cloth was 3,600 million yards, out of this 1,100 million yards were exported at much higher prices and of the balance of 2,500 million yards available for internal consumption large quantities were sold in the black market The policy of controls only enriched a few big mills and dealers and helped neither the cultivator nor the consumer The policy besides offered no incentive for cotton production

In view of these considerations, Munshi suggested to the Cabinet a scheme based on the following four planks (i) There should be no price ceiling on cotton (ii) Indirect control on cotton should be exercised by prescribing that cotton mills will have to surrender to Government at existing prices 2,600 million yards of cloth and 6 5 lakh bales of yarn (iii) Surplus production should be allowed to be sold in the free market (iv) Certain safeguards should be taken against cornering etc If necessary, an all-India committee for allocation of cotton quotas to mills may be appointed

Munshi claimed that the scheme would (a) make more cloth available in the internal market (b) help the marginal mills who are not in a position to export at present and thus encourage production, (c) stop the vicious spiral by which any piercing of the statutory cotton ceil-

ing prices is made an excuse for increasing the prices of cloth intended for controlled distribution to the common man (d) eliminate black market and thus encourage production on the one hand and bring more money to the exchequer by way of income-tax on the other, in view of the fact that whatever is produced in excess of 2,600 million yards would be sold in the free market

If the scheme had been accepted, it would have had far reaching effects on the cotton economy of the country, but, as is usual with men of imagination, Munshi's thinking was far in advance of the times and his scheme did not find favour with the Government

The most important field for the application of his ideas was however, that of food and his experiments with gram and sugar were really in the nature of a preparation for their extension to this field The earlier period of his tenure was characterised by great shortages and he had, therefore, to bide his time for a while In the middle of 1951, however, Munshi saw a silver lining in the clouds, and began to think in terms of some relaxation in the control over foodgrains With the large imports planned for 1951, he expected the food position to become fairly easy by the beginning of 1952 He was anxious to take advantage of the improvement in the position to at least rationalise the existing system of controls He visualised a scheme under which control could be relaxed while maintaining control over the more vulnerable areas

Munshi analysed the existing system of foodgrain control and rationing and avowed that it had largely failed Its permanent features were deterioration of price structure, exaggeration of deficits and minimising of surpluses, incessant demand on Centre for supplies and subsidies, diversion from food to cash crops, black-marketing

and corruption and universal dissatisfaction In the result, hoarding had become a national habit

While Munshi was not wedded to any particular scheme he was quite clear that the continuation of the existing system would lead to economic collapse He pleaded for the introduction of a revised scheme

Munshi suggested the following scheme (i) As from 1st January, 1952 the Centre should take over the food supplies of the vulnerable areas, which would entirely be in imported foodgrains That means annual imports of 3 5 million tons (ii) Then, as from 1st November, 1951, the States' barriers of movement, prices and control in the uncordoned area should be completely abolished (iii) Ration card holders in these areas should be allowed two months' rations from the 1st of November 1951 and their cards cancelled (iv) In non-vulnerable areas the States wherever necessary may open fair price shops in order to stabilize the prices The States would have something like 2 million tons on the 1st January 1952 This will provide a sufficient reserve to protect them for the whole of the next year

The scheme could not, however be enforced at the time since it was felt that it might not be possible to import foodgrains from abroad to the extent necessary and also because natural calamities in the subsequent months made the supply position difficult Munshi returned to the attack, however in the beginning of 1952, when the economic situation had changed considerably for the better The Planning Commission had in the meanwhile come out with its recommendations in respect of food policy These included

(i) continuance of the existing food control,

(ii) an integrated price structure operating primari-

ly on the principle of disincentive for cash crops rather than incentive for food crops and

(iii) isolation of internal prices from international prices through a system of subsidy for food imports and export duty for cash crops

The recommendations were based on the following assumptions

(i) The finances necessary to meet the cost of the subsidy would be available

(ii) the prices of cash crops could be brought down and an integrated price control enforced without reducing production

(iii) the physical controls would bring out the maximum marketable surplus for feeding non-producers at the controlled prices

(iv) controls would not inhibit a production drive by the States and the people, and

(v) surplus production would be procured and imports would be reduced

Munshi felt that these assumptions were unrealistic and the recommendations based on them therefore, impracticable The country could not afford the cost of the subsidy which would amount to about Rs 55 crores if 3 million tons of foodgrains were to be imported and about Rs 90 crores if 5 million tons were imported An integrated price policy would be difficult to enforce and would be ineffective in practice It could only succeed if it was part of a co-ordinated system in which wages and incomes were also frozen and effective physical controls were imposed over all competitive crops Internal prices of exportable cash crops could be controlled up to a point by adjustment of export duties, but frequent changes therein would surely affect foreign trade Physical controls always operated as a disincentive and any policy operating

on the principle of disincentives could not increase production except under totalitarian control

Munshi was of the view that the central objective of food policy should be the expansion of the marketable surplus The system of controls on the other hand had resulted in a reduction in the marketable surplus Monopoly procurement had eliminated the trade, but the producer had resorted to hoarding particularly where procurement prices were low The procurement prices, besides provided an assurance that prices would not fall below that level and there was always the possibility of getting a higher price in the black market The surplus States also hoarded their produce so that they could feed their people at low prices The deficit States had therefore a perpetual grievance against surplus States and resorted to all kinds of propaganda and pressure to secure the maximum allocation of supplies by the Centre under the Basic Plan The States were however united in laying the responsibility for all their ills on the Centre Munshi feared that if the system continued, 'the two sets of States, already critical of each other, will range themselves in two hostile camps, the indications of which have already begun in the South-North controversy' He felt that in an extensive system of controls, the State Governments required increasing (and not decreasing) assistance from imports and that under the rigid system employed in Bombay, even the slightest break in supply in the pipe line brought about a serious derangement and led to a clamour by the people

Munshi placed the whole position before the Prime Minister Munshi pointed out that the Government of India could not afford subsidies an integrated price policy implemented through a system of disincentives was impossible in view of high international prices of and

the indispensable need for cash crops, the existing system of control was not favourable for bringing into the market the marketable surplus even if it increased as a result of enhanced production So long as the existing system of controls continued, neither the object of increasing production nor that of increasing the marketed supplies would be achieved while it would be impossible to prevent the price level from rising further, nor could it be improved by small adjustments here and there Munshi stressed that a system had to be worked out which, while retaining the benefits of the existing controls, not only ceased to inhibit but on the contrary stimulated production

Munshi was anxious that any new scheme should maintain the benefits of the existing system and remove its defects It should aim at four objectives Firstly, it should establish the free flow of the marketable surplus throughout the country through the provision of facilities for rapid transport Secondly, it should remove the psychology of scarcity in the public, so that hoarding by the producers and speculative cornering by traders should be eliminated Thirdly, it should remove the pressure of urban demand on the food resources of the country by arranging for the demand to be met through Government imports The responsibility of Government for feeding the people should thus be narrowed down to only 10% of the population and it should be discharged in complete freedom from local prejudices or indifference Fourthly, the existing machinery should be preserved to the extent necessary to enable the Government to meet unforeseen emergencies in any area

Munshi proposed in pursuance of the above objectives, a seven-point scheme of controls —

(a) Large towns and highly deficit areas comprising about 40 million of the population, should

be cordoned off and rationed fully from imports of about 4 million tons of grain at international prices

(b) Inter-State bans should be removed and free market restored in the rest of the country

(c) Adequate buffer stocks for emergency purposes should be built up by the Central Government in addition to normal pipeline stocks required for rationing purposes

(d) To prevent speculation and cornering banks should be required to report advances made by them against stocks of foodgrains All godowns utilised for the storage of foodgrains and with a capacity exceeding 100 maunds should be licensed and weekly returns of stocks submitted All future trading in grain should be prohibited

(e) Licensing of traders in grain with a view to maintaining certain minimum administrative control over them milling restrictions and austerity measures (such as Guest Control Order should continue to remain in force

(f) Top priority should be given for the movement of foodgrains on railways and immediate steps should be taken to remove certain well-known bottlenecks preferably before the end of 1952 as far as practicable

(g) The scheme should be put in operation with effect from 1st November only if it is definitely known that prospects of the following *kharif* harvest are good All inter-State bans should disappear from that date and two months' ration should be issued to all ration card holders in the free area

The scheme would have divided the country into two parts viz

A Rationed area comprising of wholly or highly deficit areas which are the principal source of pressure on indigenous supplies These areas would be isolated from internal production and would be looked after from imported grains, and

B Free area, comprising of the rest of the country containing about 320 million people to be fed from the entire foodgrain production of the country This area would, on the whole, be surplus both in rice and wheat Marketable surplus will come out in the open and not only will this area be able to feed itself at reasonable prices, but, as production increases, the prices would tend to fall

Munshi explained the advantages that could be derived from the scheme The new scheme would have retained the essential points of the existing system, but done away with its defects The inter-State bans would have been removed The control of the Centre would have become more effective The rationed area would have been re-adjusted wherever necessary The food policy would have become relatively free of local political pressure It would have had a healthy effect on production marketing, prices, imports and subsidies

The confidential letter addressed by Munshi to the Prime Minister describing his scheme unfortunately leaked out in the Press prematurely, leading to serious differences of opinion The scheme could not be put into operation until after Munshi had laid down his office in May 1952 Munshi's vision was, however fully vindicated by succeeding events

The late Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, who took over from Munshi, within a few weeks introduced progressive relaxation of controls with spectacular success and popular acclaim The food situation had improved as a result of

increased production in the country and more imports from abroad—both fruits of Munshi's policy. But the precautionary measures suggested by Munshi were unfortunately overlooked while relaxing the controls. Circumstanced as he was, Kidwai could bypass the strong opposition in the Economic Committee and the Cabinet which Munshi had to fight ceaselessly. But by the time Munshi laid down office, his vigorous policy had already created conditions in which decontrol could be successfully introduced.

IV

The food problem could in the long run be solved, however, only by expanding food production at home. While steps were taken to safeguard the present by imports of foodgrains and measures for bringing out hoarded stocks, Munshi was also preparing for a grand campaign for stimulating internal production. At the time Munshi took up office, all efforts were aimed at making the country self-sufficient in foodgrains. The Prime Minister had announced in Parliament early in 1949 that no imports of food would be made after the end of 1951. In accordance with the suggestions of Lord Boyd Orr, a Special Emergency Branch had been in existence in the Ministry of Agriculture for over a year under the Commissioner of Food Production. The situation was getting more and more grave as shortages had developed in the fields of cotton, jute and sugar in addition to that of food and the Food Ministry had two organisations, one for Grow-More Food, another for other commodities, each rivalling for the attention of the cultivator.

Munshi, though without any previous experience in

the sphere of food and agriculture, had realised that the Grow-More-Food Campaign had failed to capture the imagination of the people Within ten days of taking over office, he observed at a meeting held in Bombay

> I must confess that the results so far obtained have not impressed me as being satisfactory On the side of the administration, there is lack of enthusiasm, hesitancy and absence of adjustment with the politician On the side of those in power and in the public mind also there is suspicion of the official This is happily not universal, but we cannot ignore the existence of this unfortunate situation Let us realize frankly that, while we may have set up proper governmental organisation, we have not succeeded in securing complete co-operation of the public, including the farmers in particular

Immediately on assuming office, Munshi issued a circular to all the departments of the Ministry to submit to him exhaustive notes on the activities carried on by the department, its achievements and its future programme He waded through the huge pile of reports with the mind of a trained counsel and in order to integrate all the activities in common formally, he evolved the phrase 'Land Transformation' as the ultimate objective With his gift for coining apt phrases to convey his programme, he formulated two steps —(1) to win freedom from foreign bread, (2) to achieve 'Land Transformation'

In August 1950, he first defined the term 'Land Transformation' as 'the utilization of land on a rational basis so that the available resources of land, water and livestock are developed to their maximum potential and the population assured a decent standard of living' Having fixed the goal, he bent his organizing power to give to each acti-

vity of the Ministry an appropriate place in this homogeneous scheme

With characteristic decision, Munshi put forward an Eight Point Programme, which laid emphasis on the need for an integral approach towards food and agriculture This programme postulated the following

(i) The setting up of an Inter-Departmental Emergency Committee of both the Ministries at the Centre, with Munshi as Chairman, which would take important decisions on urgent and pressing matters for increasing production of food, cotton and jute

(ii) District Committees of three or four people commanding the respect and confidence of local farmers to assist the Collector or Deputy Commissioner

(iii) Strengthening Village Panchayats and constituting Rural Development Boards

(iv) The District Committees, under the constant supervision of the Emergency Committee of the State, to examine every well, tank, channel, or boring in its territories, and take special steps to have them repaired or restored before the monsoon

(v) Because of its capacity to irrigate larger areas the tubewell is ideal for irrigation wherever underground water can be found The State Governments to invite experienced firms to bore tube-wells

(vi) To have a co-ordinated plan for achieving threefold self-sufficiency in food, cotton and jute

(vii) The value of increasing forests in the country a programme of planting and rearing hundreds of thousands of trees in all parts of the country, and every year to have a national week devoted solely to the task of tree plantation

(viii) To organize the growing of vegetables and pota-

toes and tubers in the environs of large cities so as to supplement diet in rationed areas.

The Eight Point Programme was, however, only the beginning in Munshi's formulation of a new food and agricultural policy It was soon expanded into the 'Integrated Production Programme' He summarised this programme at a press conference on 8th July, 1950:

> The Integrated Production Programme is a comprehensive one under which land, water, livestock and science will be co-ordinated and harnessed in order to support our vast and growing population
>
> Its immediate objectives are (a) winning freedom from foreign bread by the end of 1951, and (b) achieving progressive realisation of a self-sufficient economy for the whole country
>
> The ultimate goal, distant no doubt, is Land Transformation in suitable areas It involves a degree of co-ordinated development in an area in which all resources (a) of land and water, (b) of livestock, scientific aid and equipment and (c) facilities for farm and farm worker must be fully developed

Munshi thus visualized the task before him as a welding together of activities on many fronts viz, agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery, forestry, etc, with a single design, transforming the very face of the land

The immediate problem before the country was to achieve self-sufficiency in foodgrains, freedom from foreign bread, as Munshi called it, so as to be able to do without imports after the end of 1951 as laid down by the Prime Minister This meant that food production had to be stepped up by the end of 1951 by 48 lakh tons, over the production of 1947-48 During the two years 1948-49 and 1949-50, the various schemes undertaken under the Grow-More-Food Campaign were estimated to have added 16 lakh tons

even so a balance of 32 lakh tons was left to be achieved during 1950 and 1951 At the same time difficulties had also arisen with respect to cotton, jute, and sugar The annual requirements of Indo-Pakistan varieties of cotton were estimated at 40 7 lakh bales as against an internal production of 39 lakh bales of jute and mesta in 1949-50 The production of sugar had also fallen short of internal requirements

The problem could no longer therefore, be treated as one of only doing without food imports, if food imports were dispensed with, increased imports of cotton, jute and sugar might become necessary It was a problem of deciding how the cultivable area at home could be best utilised and the foreign exchange resources best conserved Munshi's main contention was that the foreign exchange saved by way of producing additional quantities of cotton and jute at home, instead of importing them from abroad, would be far greater than the foreign exchange necessary for importing the foodgrains lost due to the diversion of areas from food to cotton and jute Munshi's plan for diversion of area would have resulted in additional production of about 11 lakh bales of cotton and about 20 lakh bales of jute as against a loss of food of only about 9 lakh tons thereby providing a net saving to the country of about Rs 106 8 crores, which could be utilised for importing additional quantities of foodgrains and capital goods required for industrial development There would also be similar savings in foreign exchange besides increase in Government revenue as a result of increased internal production of sugar which could be achieved without large diversion of area from foodgrains

The policy of non-import of food by the end of 1951 had, however, become an article of faith with the Cabinet and it was considered highly sacrilegious to question its

wisdom or timing It was being repeated again and again by national leaders at every forum and for a Food and Agriculture Minister, who was responsible for implementing it, to show any scepticism about it would have been an act of political suicide

While Munshi was attempting a switch-over in high policy, he was at the same time careful to reiterate the solemn pledge previously given —

> The object of self-sufficiency by 31st March 1952 is a solemn pledge taken by the Government and there can be no going back on it When the food policy was placed on a war footing at the Chief Ministers' conference, there was no mental reservation and the sooner the Centre, the States and the people realise this, the better it will be for achieving early results After 'Quit-India' this is the first non-violent war we have undertaken Failure would mean loss of self-confidence and the loss of world's confidence in us

The switch-over of policy was so deftly done that nobody realised that a major shift in the pledge itself had been achieved At no time, previously, had the pledge to stop imports of food been linked with the date of 31st March 1952, the words used had always been "by the end of 1951" Munshi first interpreted this to mean the end of the financial year 1951 and quietly introduced the date of 31st March 1952, as if that was what had all along been meant Later, he extended this period to 31st June 1952, on the plea that the *rabi* crop of 1951-52 was not harvested till June and that it was, therefore, better to interpret the pledge as referring to the crop year 1951-52, which ended on 31st June 1952, rather than the financial year 1951-52 which ended on 31st March 1952 These two changes in the pledge extended the

period by full six months The pledge, besides, had made allowance only for unforeseen circumstances and it was believed that these only covered crop failures and famines. The unforeseen circumstances were now to cover, in addition, replacement due to diversion of crop and the building up of a Central Reserve These two factors were of such large quantitative significance that they could justify imports on any scale As a result of these changes, the pledge became completely flexible and was reduced to no more than a general directive principle without any immediate restrictive significance It required great political courage to introduce these changes and considerable logic and reasoning to persuade others in high places to accept them An adherence to the no-import declaration had caused considerable difficulties in 1950 and might have spelt disaster in the years that followed

Schemes were formulated under the Grow-More-Food campaign, which if implemented, would have increased foodgrains production by 17 lakh tons in 1950-51 and 23 lakh tons in 1951-52, thus making up 40 lakh tons by the target date Even allowing for losses due to diversion of areas to cotton and jute, which were estimated at 9 lakh tons, the balance would have been enough for making the country self-sufficient The difficulty of finance, however, stood in the way and the original target of 23 lakh tons for 1951-52 had to be cut down to 14 lakh tons

The fact that even despite the poor food crops of 1950-51, the Planning Commission agreed to a plea for increased production of cotton, jute, sugar and oilseeds, testifies to the advocacy of Munshi and the merits of his integrated approach to crop production The actual loss of foodgrains due to diversion of areas to cotton and jute is estimated to have been very little—much less even than what was envisaged under the Integrated Production Pro-

gramme The overall production of foodgrains, however, did not make much headway due to the natural calamities that overtook the country in 1951-52

The measures adopted for expanding cotton production included extension of irrigation facilities to cotton land, grant of interest-free loans for the purchase of improved varieties of cottonseed and ammonium sulphate and the appointment of cotton extension staff for propaganda and technical advice The crux of the problem, according to Munshi, lay, however, in assuring remunerative prices to the cultivator

Munshi succeeded in getting the prices of cotton raised both during 1950-51 and 1951-52, so as to provide the necessary incentive to the cultivator for bringing in additional land under cotton

The problems of jute were a glaring instance of the great damage done by Partition to the economy of India While all the jute mills were within the Indian Union, the main jute belt which produced four-fifths of the raw material required by the mills had gone to Pakistan After the devaluation of the Indian rupee in September 1949, imports from Pakistan had become costly and uncertain A Development Plan for increasing the production of jute in the country had therefore been put into operation since 1948-49 The measures adopted for increasing the production of jute included distribution of seeds and fertilizers, growing of an earlier crop of jute in addition to that of rice on winter paddy land, and removal of legislative restrictions on jute cultivation in West Bengal

After Munshi took over office the above schemes were continued In addition he took the step of encouraging the diversion of acreage from paddy to jute and the States were assured that any loss to food production resulting

therefrom would be made good by additional allocation of foodgrains under the Basic Plan

As in the case of cotton, so too in the case of jute, there was need for a suitable price policy if the targets set under the Plan were to be achieved The prices of raw jute and jute goods were controlled since the devaluation of the Indian rupee, as imports from Pakistan had become costly and prices in India had begun to rise Price control served the twin objects of allowing exports of jute goods at a reasonable price and avoiding large-scale diversion of areas from paddy

Munshi's jute policy was eminently successful Production went up from 31 9 lakh bales in 1949-50 to 32 8 lakh bales in 1950-52 During 1951-52 alone, 67% of the target of 20.9 lakh bales of additional production set in the first Five-Year Plan had been achieved

The sugar situation was anything but hopeful when Munshi took over office Only 9 8 lakh tons of sugar had been produced in 1949-50 and there was a short-fall of about 1 lakh tons even on the existing meagre ration It was found possible to import only about 60 thousand tons of sugar, and that too with great difficulty and at a prohibitive price There was, therefore an acute scarcity of sugar in the country and the prices of sugar and *gur* were tending to rise The black market price of sugar was reported to have gone up to between Rs 80/- to Rs 100/- per maund, as against the controlled price of Rs 28/8/- per maund *Gur* too was sold at between Rs 40/- to Rs 45/- per maund

The problem before Munshi was, therefore, two-fold

(a) to step up the production of sugar by at least one million tons, by diverting sufficient cane from *gur* to the factories, and

(b) to bring down the price of *gur* to an economic level.

Munshi felt that extension of controls was not likely to produce results, as control of sugar was not feasible without control of *gur* and control of *gur* was unenforceable in practice The Cabinet, however, decided that the control on sugar should continue and that, at the same time *gur* and khandsari too should be brought under control The fixation of statutory ceilings on prices of gur and khandsari in parity, with the prices of sugar and sugar-cane, and the licensing of *kolhus* (cane-crushers, power-crushers and khandsari plants in factory areas) came to be introduced, in consequence The prices of sugar and sugar-cane in the year 1950-51 were fixed at the levels of 1949-50 i e at Rs 28/8/- and Rs 1/10/- per maund respectively and subsidy was given to factories in Western U P on all sugar produced between 15th November and 15th December, 1950, when the recovery of sugar was generally supposed to be low, so as to induce them to start production earlier in the season

Munshi was not happy with the decision and placed his views before the Prime Minister He said that the crux of the whole matter was adequate sugar production, without which the gur prices were not likely to come down. With complete control over sugar and only ineffective control over gur, the prices of gur would rule high, in spite of cane being diverted to gur and more gur being produced. The result would be that the ordinary consumer will have to go short of both sugar, on account of short production and gur, by its going underground on account of price control

Munshi, however, was not merely critical but made concrete proposals for dealing with the situation He pro-

posed, firstly, that a slight increase should be granted in the price of sugar in Bihar and East U.P either directly or indirectly by giving other advantages, and secondly, that a few more factories outside the Western U P should be included in the concession of extra price, so as to secure the production of 1,00,000 tons of sugar by 15th of December

Soon after the announcement of the policy on 18th October, 1950, it became clear that the licensing of *kolhus* could not be effectively enforced. The cost of production of sugar also increased, in the meanwhile, due to the Labour Arbitration awards in U P and Bihar and the imposition of Sales Tax on cane in Bihar. The sugar policy had, therefore, to be reconsidered and the Government of India announced their new sugar and gur policy to all State Governments on the 7th December, 1950, as follows:

> The only alternative open is to continue control but operate it in a manner which will give the advantage of decontrol as far as possible This will enable the Government to maintain a grip over the situation It has, therefore, been decided:
>
> (a) not to proceed with the licensing of *kolhus*, and to allow gur to be manufactured freely:
>
> (b) to revise the prices fixed for gur, sugar-cane and sugar so to provide adequate incentive for further sugar production, having regard to the difference in the manufacturing costs of sugar factories in different regions,
>
> (c) to ensure regulated distribution of sugar out of the quantity of sugar procured from the factories, leaving surplus production to a free market

In pursuance of the above policy, the minimum price

of cane was raised to Rs 1/12/- in Bihar and the all-India basic price of sugar to Rs 29/12/- with concession to some factories. The ceiling price of gur was also raised, in parity with sugar and sugarcane prices The price of sugar fixed by the Government was to operate only in respect of the quantity procured by the Government from the factories for controlled distribution through ration shops The ceiling of 10 lakh tons was fixed for procurement for the country as a whole Basic quotas were fixed for all factories and they were left free to market any quantity produced in excess of the basic quota in the open market without restriction as to price

This policy, popularly known as the policy of 'Selective Control', was the result of Munshi's own creative genius It provided the consumer with a minimum ration at a controlled price and, at the same time, it provided the producer with a powerful incentive for increasing production Munshi explained the scheme to the 20th Annual Convention of the Sugar Technologists' Association of India, Kanpur, held on October 25, 1951, in the following words —

> The new sugar policy has been well received by all concerned Production has increased from 9 8 lakh tons in 1949-50 to 11 1 lakh tons in 1950-51, the highest during the last seven years Against a carry-over of 25,000 tons on 1st December, 1950, the carry-over on the same date this year is expected to exceed one lakh tons The consumer is satisfied The cane-growers have received more than the minimum price in most parts of the country sugarcane acreage has increased in the current year The steps taken by the Ministry have prevented export to border States and thereby prevented large-scale smuggling across

the frontier The market price of sugar has been generally much lower than the black market price last year Prices of gur, sugar and khandsari have also come down Many factories have increased their production and received increased profits The Central Government have derived an increased revenue from incometax and excise duty the State Governments have derived increased receipts of sugarcane cess On the whole, therefore, this policy has had a beneficial effect

Encouraged by his success during 1950-51, Munshi decided to continue the policy of 'Selective Control' during 1951-52 also The minimum price of sugarcane, as also the ex-factory price of sugar, was kept at the same level as in 1950-51 In 1951-52, the policy of 'Selective Control' yielded even better results The production of sugar during this year reached nearly 15 lakh tons, an all-time record in the history of the Indian sugar industry The production of sugarcane also showed a remarkable increase from 56 2 lakh tons in 1950-51 to 60 7 lakh tons in 1951-52 Price of crystal sugar came down appreciably Price of gur, too, declined The improvement in sugar production enabled the Government of India to further relax the control on sugar during 1952-53

In regard to sugar, Munshi's interests were confined not only to the formulation and implementation of the policy of 'Selective Control', but extended to other spheres as well Believing in the value of research, Munshi decided that an Institute of Sugar Technology should be set up at Lucknow Before he left the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, the foundation stone of this Institute was laid Munshi also continued to patronise the Five-Year Sugarcane Development Scheme launched by the Indian Central

Sugarcane Committee in the year 1948-49, with the help of a special grant of Rs 75 lakhs from the Government of India The scheme operated primarily in the factory zones in the various States where necessary provision was made for the supply of better irrigation facilities, establishment of nurseries for high-yielding, healthy and disease-free seed, adequate supplies of manures and fertilisers, watch and ward service for the protection of crops against pests etc Munshi was also seriously considering a scheme for shifting factories from the U P and Bihar to the low-cost regions of Bombay, Deccan and the South.

The main effort in the sphere of agriculture continued however, to be concentrated on the prosecution of the Grow More Food Campaign which was in progress since 1943 The campaign was being implemented through a number of short-term schemes, both permanent and recurring, designed to produce results within a short period These schemes were sponsored by State Governments and were financed through assistance from the Central Government The schemes included.

(a) works schemes, such as construction and repair of wells, tanks, channels, small dams, contour bunding etc

(b) supply schemes such as the distribution of chemical fertilizers, manures, compost and improved seeds, and

(c) schemes for plant protection

Soon after Munshi took up office in August 1950, he convened a conference of the Chief Ministers of States at which the following decisions were taken —

(i) The self-sufficiency programme must be fulfilled The outbreak of the Korean War made it all the more necessary that the food

problem should be managed from internal resources

(ii) Food procurement and food production must be organized on an efficient war footing and pursued as matters of highest priority. The administrative machinery should be overhauled and strengthened where necessary

(iii) There must be unified direction in matters of food policy between the Centre and the States

In addition to the above, certain decisions were also taken for intensification of procurement and checking of hoarding

Munshi also submitted a note to Parliament in April 1951, pointing out the main obstacles in the execution of the G M F campaign Firstly, the G M F results were unevenly distributed throughout the country In States which were endowed with natural resources, the G M F. results were good The States, however, which had less natural advantages or where the administrative efficiency was lower, showed poor results Secondly, the responsibility of the Centre, under the existing system of Food Administration, for meeting deficits tended to take the edge off that compulsive necessity which was needed for stimulating the States to their highest effort for increasing production Thirdly, there was no concentration of effort in selected areas, and the dispersal of effort led to dissipation of energy Fourthly, due to various factors, such as increase in prices resulting in the producer meeting his requirements by marketing a smaller quantity of produce, shortage of bullock power and labour, allotment of land to non-agricultural refugees etc, the land received less care than before Fifthly, the seasonal factors were not in

favour of increased production Sixthly, the organizational efficiency required to implement a programme of that magnitude was not in evidence. The administrative machinery at the Centre and the States was hurriedly set up, was expanded rapidly and was therefore ill-equipped for extensive effort The dispersal of effort also resulted in inefficiency in execution Seventhly, it was not possible for the Centre to achieve the sense of urgency required for the campaign merely by order, as the States enjoyed complete autonomy Eighthly, the increase in production was not followed by an increase in marketable surpluses because the producer increased his own consumption and withheld considerable stocks from the markets The increase in his holding capacity and the fear of procurement tempted the cultivator to build up a personal reserve and to hoard a part of the grain for the black market Ninthly, there was a shift in consumption from coarse grains to wheat and rice

Munshi adopted a number of measures to improve the execution of the programme during his period of office These measures were described by Munshi as follows

(i) Preference is given to schemes of permanent improvement such as minor irrigation and land improvement works

(ii) The financial assistance of the Centre to the States is now given mainly as loans and outright grants are kept at a minimum

(iii) In order to secure effective co-operation between the Centre and some of the States, it was decided to set up Special Boards for developing large contiguous areas The Malwa Board has been working on these lines

(iv) Preference is given to Intensive Area

Schemes, in which different types of G M F. works are concentrated in selected areas providing the most favourable conditions

(v) In Intensive Area Schemes, financial assistance is made conditional on a minimum proportion of the additional production being surrendered to the Government for ascertaining the results of the G M F Campaign

(vi) Special crop-cutting surveys have been initiated for assessing the results of the G M F campaign.

(vii) In order to ensure the application of fertilizers to foodgrains only and to prevent their diversion to cash crops, Government have selected suitable areas and fixed the time of distribution

(viii) In order to prevent the misuse of loans, cases of misuse are investigated and deterrent action taken against the defaulters One State has even enacted a legislation imposing heavy penalty for misuse

(ix) In order to prevent supplies from going into the black-market through trade agencies, distribution of seeds, fertilisers and implements is organised through co-operative societies and Government Depots

(x) To ensure that adequate quantities of essential supplies like cement, iron and steel and coal are available for agricultural purposes, a Supply and Movement Officer has been appointed

(xi) To avoid transport bottlenecks, priorities for railway movement are obtained through

special effort of the Railway Ministry wherever necessary.

(xii) The C T O has been fully reorganised after a special enquiry.

(xiii) Contracts for the construction of 965 tube wells have already been executed and those for additional tubewells are under consideration.

(xiv) The State Governments have been requested to undertake special legislation to ensure the cultivation of waste land and fallow lands and a number of States have already adopted necessary measures. About 150 thousand acres have been already allotted in the Malwa area

(xv) Large numbers of pumps and engines are imported and licences are freely given

(xvi) The executive machinery at the Centre for Production has now been unified under an Additional Secretary

(xvii) The execution of the programme has been strengthened by the appointment of Regional Agricultural Production Commissioners for different zones in the country

(xviii) In order to carry the results of research to the cultivators' fields, a scheme for the setting up of a number of demonstration and extension farms all over the country is being undertaken

(xix) In order to improve the organisation for popularising the improved practices and for linking it up with the supply of materials, a scheme has been prepared for the esta-

blishment of an extension service which will reach down to the tehsils and villages.

(xx) The I.C.A.R. has been reorganised for the purpose of integrating research, training and extension activities.

(xxi) The intensive projects are being initiated in selected areas for concentrated development

The extension of the G M F campaign under the first Five-Year Plan, and the establishment of the extension service are a fulfilment of what Munshi had in mind

There were besides two new innovations which he made in the interest of additional production These were the setting up of the Malwa Development Board, and the working out of the scheme of Associated Farms

The constitution of separate Boards under Central supervision for the development of contiguous regions falling under the purview of more than one State was initiated for the first time by Munshi during 1950 An experiment was tried in this direction by the setting up of the Malwa Development Board under the joint auspices of the Central Government and the Governments of Vindhya Pradesh, Bhopal, Madhya Bharat and Rajasthan This Board was entrusted with the responsibility of increasing the production of food crops in general and of wheat in particular in the administrative areas of the States concerned Regional Committees for each State were set up to formulate schemes for increasing production, such as provision of good seeds, renovation of tanks, installation of water lifts and construction of small canals These committees were under the direct supervision of the Central Board with the Minister for Food and Agriculture as Chairman and the heads of the States concerned as members The total amount sanctioned by the Board for diffe-

rent developmental measures was to the extent of Rs 50 lakhs, mostly by way of loans The progress made in the area as a result of the direct supervision of the Board was encouraging.

In order to encourage public institutions to take the leadership in starting large-scale farms, Munshi got a detailed scheme drawn up to start a net work of Associated Farms throughout the country The advantages of these Farms were four-fold Firstly, such Farms, when started in large numbers all over the country, could add substantially to food production Secondly, they would demonstrate to the public the economies of large-scale production in agriculture Thirdly, they would surrender their surpluses to the rationing authority and would lead to increased procurement Fourthly, they would have an important impress on the educational system of the country and give it an agricultural bias

The main features of the scheme of Associated Farms were as follows Firstly, the initiative in starting an Associated Farm was to be taken up by a public institution whether official or non-official, engaged in agricultural educational or charitable activities and having a certain minimum of cultivable land under its ownership These institutions, after securing the willing consent of the farmers in the neighbourhood, would formally constitute themselves into corporate bodies, on the basis of either (a) Registered Society, or (b) Co-operative Society, or (c) Joint Stock Company The existing rights of ownership or tenancy of members would continue unchanged but the land would be leased to the body for a period of five years The lands of all the members would be pooled together and cultivated jointly Secondly, the farms were to have an area of about 1,000 acres or more, covering as

nearly as possible an entire village and should, as far as possible, be in a region with assured rainfall Thirdly, the liability for land revenue charges, rent and other expenses connected with cultivation should be taken over by the Farm and employment should be provided to the cultivators and their families as far as possible Fourthly, the Central and State Governments should extend the same assistance to these farms as was extended to approved G M F schemes under the existing rules The Farms in return should surrender their surplus grain to the State Governments at the procurement prices

The most spectacular enterprise of Munshi in the food sphere was, however, his drive for the popularization of subsidiary foods and in this enterprise, he received powerful collaboration from Shrimati Lilavati Munshi who made it her own special province Munshi often says that in most of his activities, the idea is contributed by his imagination but its detailed planning and execution is done by his wife In this case, this certainly was true About two months after taking over, Munshi, in an address to the Hotel Owners Association at Bombay, proposed two things first, that the people should observe Monday as a non-cereal day, and second, that non-cereal food should be made cheap and more attractive Munshi stated that these things required a planned effort and that of all the places in India Bombay was the most suitable place for such an effort The proposal was, however, given concrete form only by Shrimati Lilavati Munshi through the establishment of the Annapurna cafeteria under the auspices of the All-India Women's Food Council, which was specially set up for the purpose through her initiative A beginning was, however, made with these cafeterias first in Delhi and only later extended to Bombay

The main features of Munshi's scheme were as follows.

(a) every home to observe Monday as a non-cereal day;

(b) the Government of Bombay, in consultation with the Government of India, to prepare a plan to secure a plentiful supply of cheap vegetables for the city,

(c) a ladies organisation, to help in these activities, to take up the running of cafeterias at important places in order to provide cheap and attractive non-cereal food A lunch basket of non-cereal food was expected to cost about 8 annas

(d) help to be given by the Governments of India and Bombay to provide adequate facilities for the catering trade in Bombay to have their own vegetable gardens

(e) women to take to vegetable growing in boxes in their own homes to supplement their vegetable supply

Munshi mentioned that if this scheme was carried through in all industrial areas, the country could save about 2 million tons of cereal imports and that the women of the country could do a lot to help him in this cause

The All-India Women's Council for Supplementary Food was set up in August, 1950, with Shrimati Rajbansi Devi as President and representatives of the All-India Women's organisation and other prominent women active in the public, social and parliamentary life of the country, among its members By 31st March, 1952, the Council was able to organise 25 branches in different parts of the country On the 1st December, 1950, the Council organised an exhibition of supplementary foods at New Delhi, which was opened by the President of India The main object of the exhibition was to emphasise the value of supplementary

foods in the daily diet, with special reference to cheap, balanced and tasty meals The various recipes were brought out in the form of booklets On the 12th January 1951, the Council opened the 'Annapurna cafeteria' in New Delhi to show that nutritious and tasty food could be prepared from non-rationed supplementary foods The cafeteria proved very popular and its sales mounted up in a short period Encouraged by this experience, similar cafeterias were also opened in other towns and a mobile cafeteria was started in Delhi The other activities of the Council included cooking demonstrations, convening women's meetings, and propaganda for observing one day in the week as a non-cereal day The Council also popularized a pledge from the people not to buy food from the black market, not to cash cards if there was surplus food at home, to take only six days' ration in the week, to try and grow more food and vegetables in compounds and not to waste any food

In his preoccupation with expansion of agricultural production, Munshi did not lose sight of the importance of forests in the agriculture economy Not only did he evolve a coherent forest policy, but he gave it a flair of romance that immediately captured the imagination of the people He did this by introducing a new festival called the 'Vana Mahotsava' or the 'Festival of Trees' with the now famous slogan 'Trees mean water, water means bread and bread is life ' It made the whole country tree-conscious, and evoked mass enthusiasm

The festival was first inaugurated in July 1950 and since then is celebrated every year in the first week of July, which generally synchronises with the break of monsoons in most parts of the country Munshi inaugurated the festival in 1950, by planting a tree at Dehotsarga, the spot where Lord Krishna shuffled off His mortal coils,

and emphasized the close tie between forests and Lord Krishna

Munshi was deeply conscious of the relation between the food problem and the denudation of forests He was greatly taken with the problem of soil erosion which was the cause of large tracts of land in the country going barren and knew that it was due mainly to want of trees Forests were being denuded of trees rapidly in the mountainous regions and more particularly in the Himalayas, on which depends the water supply of the river systems of the Indo-Gangetic basin Deep ravines have been cut on the treeless banks of the great rivers The Rajasthan desert was encroaching every year by about 50 square miles upon the fertile Gangetic plains, cowdung, a valuable manure, was being burnt in the village for want of fuel trees Munshi knew the significance of trees as a means to checking erosion and preserving the fertility of the soil and raised the question to the level of a national creed

Munshi wanted a national drive for reviving the green glory of the forest He wanted everybody to take part in the achievement of the sacred ojective of growing trees The target was set at the planting of 1 crore trees in the first year and 3 crores every year from the second year onward

In order to inculcate a spirit of emulation among people for planting of trees during the celebration of Vana Mahotsava, award of rotating shields by the Government of India were announced These shields included

I *All India Shields*

1 Best District in India—Rajendra Shield
2 Best Village in India—Jawahar Shield
3 Best Institution in India—Patel Shield
4 Best University in India—Munshi Shield

II *State Shields*

For the best district in the State or certain groups of States—20 shields

Besides making a nation-wide appeal for growing trees, Munshi also made individual appeals to certain cities Thus in May, 1950, he appealed to the merchants of Bombay to give him 10,000 trees at a cost of Rs 15 each at Dehotsarga. Likewise he appealed to the citizens of Delhi for 2,000 trees in order to surround Rajghat where Mahatma Gandhi, the 'Father of Our Nation' and the 'Modern Prince of Peace' was cremated

It is not enough to have trees It is also necessary that these be given proper care and protection after they are planted In order to secure this, most of the tree planting was encouraged in the grounds of public buildings Schemes were prepared to induce occupants of land adjoining public roads and railway lines to plant fruit trees on the fringe of such public land, on condition that the planter of a tree looked after it and in return received the right to the fruits and timber after a number of years A Vana Premi Sangh was constituted, with the President of the Republic as its patron This Sangh has branches all over India, it stimulates interest in planting trees and provides a forum for mutual exchange of information and experience

Vana Mahotsava brought about tree-mindedness and was taken up with enthusiasm During the first year itself, 4 21 crores of trees were planted against the target of 1 crore In the next year too, the target of 3 crores was exceeded Year after year the festival has been celebrated by the country since then

Vana Mahotsava was however only the popular expression of the detailed and elaborate measures adopted by Munshi for the development of forestry The Vana

Mahotsava movement found a response not only in our own people but also in other lands. It has inspired similar movements in Pakistan and Egypt and has been adopted as a plank in the world programme of the FAO

Munshi however had always a feeling that the agricultural production programme was after all conceived only in the nature of an emergency programme and the deep-rooted problems of India could be adequately catered to only if a more permanent and dynamic agency was established He was, therefore, toying in his mind with various patterns of organization and while studying the experience of other countries was greatly taken with the Netherlands' Health Companie which, while originally started by private enterprise, had now become the biggest instrument of the Netherlands' Ministry of Agriculture for carrying out land development and afforestation He thought that such a corporation with unfettered powers and full freedom of action, would have a better chance of producing results than Departments of Agriculture He felt that a Land Development Corporation should be established in India working on about the same lines as the Netherlands' Health Companie, but adapted to the circumstances in India It should work either on a non-profit basis as in the case of the Health Companie, or on a minimum profit It should start its development activities in a carefully selected area of a reasonable size, say about 50,000 to 100,000 acres It should supply the farmers with seeds and fertilisers, appoint its own supervising technical staff and train local farmers in mechanised cultivation and all branches of soil utilisation and conservation It should, at a later stage, even take over the Central Tractor Organisation as a going concern It could obtain capital resources from the International Bank and the U S Technical and Economic Aid Programme in case foreign ex-

change resources were necessary, and from the Government and the public, in respect of rupee finance Government should contribute 50 per cent of the share capital required and guarantee a reasonable rate of interest for a specified number of years.

The Cabinet generally approved of Munshi's idea of floating a Land Development Corporation with the assistance of the International Bank, but Munshi soon went out of office and his pet dream unfortunately remains unfulfilled

The development of animal husbandry and the expansion of its production was also included in Munshi's Integrated Production Programme It was, however, much more than an economic issue to him, to his mind, deeply steeped in the cultural and religious history of our land, cattle were an object of veneration and affection The cow is 'Mother Cow' to him and buffalo, 'Aunt Buffalo' The cow was 'not a mere animal nor a source of beef but an integral part of our life' He had an abounding interest in the bullock which 'carries on its patient shoulders the heavy burden of India's agriculture' He was deeply affected to find that our people had lost their traditional national sentiment about livestock

With characteristic energy and drive, Munshi set about taking steps to remedy the situation The first step taken was the formation of the Central Gaushala Development Board for re-organising the existing 3,000 Gaushalas The second step was the introduction in Parliament of the 'Gosamvardhan Bill' The objective of this Bill was to constitute Central and State Councils of Gosamvardhan, charged with the duty of taking appropriate measures to promote Gosamvardhan The Bill had to be dropped for various reasons but a Central Council of Gosamvardhan was established through executive action Thirdly the

Key Village Scheme was formulated for the purpose of weeding out useless cattle and encouraging the breeding of improved cattle for milk and draught purposes

The Key Village had three components Firstly, the scheme envisaged the setting up of 600 Key Villages all over India during the Five Year Plan period 1951-56, for the multiplication of the pedigree bulls available in the country Until the Key Village Scheme got going, key farms were to be set up around existing cattle breeding farms 'Gosadans' were also to be established in the Key Villages Gosadans were to be located in the forest areas and elsewhere where old and decrepit cattle can be kept without much expenditure and where they can die natural death without multiplying themselves or encroaching upon the slender fodder resources of the country Secondly, the scheme aimed at 150 artificial insemination centres in order to multiply pedigree bulls as rapidly as possible and to accelerate the progress of breeding Thirdly, it was proposed also to establish 540 bull rearing farms in conjunction with these Key Villages The proposal for bull rearing farms was later dropped and instead a calf rearing scheme was included in the Five-Year Plan

Another important scheme formulated by Munshi related to the eradication of rinderpest which takes a high toll of cattle in India every year About 320 million cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goat and camels are susceptible to rinderpest and require to be vaccinated for the eradication of the disease

The schemes for Key Village and eradication of rinderpest were given due importance at Munshi's instance in the first Five Year Plan This programme provided for an annual production of roughly 60,000 bulls of high quality fit for breeding purposes The aim of the scheme

for rinderpest was to treat 150 million animals at the end of the 10-year period

It was not to be expected that Munshi would remain satisfied with only pushing food production on the agricultural and animal husbandry front Though himself a pure vegetarian, he was aware of the long tradition of pisci-culture in India and the importance of fish as food in a country with such a long coastline

The main types of fisheries are two, viz, (i) inland and (ii) marine, and each of these had its own potentialities Regarding inland fisheries, which contributed about one-third to the total production of fish in India, Munshi felt that these had a special significance, as they enabled the people in the interior to get this food in wholesome condition and at a reasonable price without the need for transport and refrigeration facilities The development of these fisheries besides did not require any large capital outlay or the import of fishing vessels and gear from abroad The development of marine fisheries, on the other hand called for facilities for refrigeration, quick transport for the catches and processing Munshi, in this connection suggested the expansion of the Dory system of fishing with long lines and felt that deep-sea fishing would naturally follow, when off-shore harvest proved successful and remunerative

The Central Government, under Munshi's inspiration, gave considerable financial assistance for implementing various schemes for fishery development under the G M F campaign In addition to helping deficit States in obtaining large quantities of fish seeds from surplus areas, assorted fry and finger-lings of major carps were supplied by the Central Inland Fisheries Station to a number of States The Pilot Deep-Sea Fishing Station of the Govern-

ment of India also expanded its activities under his guidance.

The integration effected by Munshi in the diverse production activities in the field of agriculture was due to his faith in the philosophy of Land Transformation, which he felt was, in essence, the restoration of unity between man and nature

> Man must integrate himself into his environment, he must return to the soil what he receives from it, he must be soil-minded, he must not shun dirt and mud on the excuse of spurious culture He must maintain an equilibrium between himself and his environment, thereby preserving the Cycle of Life unbroken In this Cycle, trees, human beings and animals, particularly the stud-bulls and the cows, their food and their waste—all have a place. The essence of Life Cycle is to maintain a symbiosis, a balance and an equilibrium between them

Munshi referred again and again to the Life Cycle, which seemed to have a semi-scientific, semi-cultural hold on his imagination He thought that in the golden age, when the rich lands of India were watered by the great river systems of the country, equilibrium was maintained for millenniums because our ancestors had evolved a traditional art of Land Transformation Rain came in plenty, flooding the rivers, and these waters served the settlements on the banks The rain was stored in lakes and public tanks and the Kings and Emperors and well-to-do men maintained these lakes and tanks in working order Even with regard to nutrition, every village consumed primarily what it produced Cattle also helped in maintaining the balance of nature, as night soil and urine were not wasted The cattle gave good milk and the fields were fertilised by their manure Subsequent developments, however, broke

this Cycle, disturbed the equilibrium, and led to the disintegration of the life of the country.

According to Munshi, the Cycle Life or *'Jiwan Chakra'* was at the root of the unity of Man and Nature, without which life on earth must become extinct It is his faith in the Wheel of Life and the basic postulations about the laws of its working that drove Munshi to devise and implement programmes of intensive cultivation, reclamation, extension, Gosamvardhan, Vana Mahotsava and others, with a kind of religious frenzy He was sustained in all his efforts by his beliefs, born out of his respect for the wisdom of the ancients and his pride in the past glories of our land

V

The problem of agricultural production is not, however, merely a problem of allocating the available area amongst different crops and improving the organisation of cultivation It is fast becoming a problem of increasing the yields The limits of extensive cultivation have been reached and the future lies in intensive cultivation

The problem of increasing yields is a problem of good husbandry It involves three things viz. evolving the principles of husbandry, disseminating this knowledge amongst the tillers and rousing enthusiasm amongst them for their adoption The first calls for attention to research, the second to education and training and the third to the provision of incentives to effort

The research activities in the field of agriculture, forests, animal husbandry and fisheries are spread over the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the Central Commodity Committees and the Central Research Institutes The activities of the different agencies were going on more

or less indifferently and even overlapped to some extent. Munshi soon found that the agencies followed their own isolated and lofty paths, unrelated to the needs of the country. He came to the conclusion that the existing machinery needed considerable adjustment so as to enable it to shoulder the extended responsibilities which shortages in food and other agricultural products involved. He decided that the work should proceed in a co-ordinated manner in all the three different spheres: (a) fundamental research, (b) technological investigation, (c) putting knowledge to practical use. As a first step, he decided to revise the constitution of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research which was the primary agency of the Central Ministry of Food and Agriculture in the field of research, so as to enable it to deal more effectively with its responsibilities.

The constitution of the I.C.A.R. was accordingly revised by Munshi in November, 1950, in order to enable it to deal more effectively with its responsibilities. The Governing Body of the Council was given the assistance of a Board of Research and a Board of Extension in evolving integrated programmes of work in these two major spheres. For the first time, the powers of the Council were partly delegated to a Standing Committee which could meet at regular intervals and enforce the policy laid down thus making the work of the Council more dynamic. The Council and its various administrative bodies were reinforced by additional representation for forestry and fisheries and for specialised organisations such as the Indian Central Commodity Committees, the Central Board of Forestry, etc.

Simultaneously with the measures taken to reorganise agricultural research, the I.C.A.R. also embarked upon an elaborate extension programme under the leadership of

Munshi which laid the foundation for the development eventually on a large scale of agricultural extension work now undertaken in the Community Projects and National Extension areas A Commissioner of Extension was appointed at the Centre to coordinate the extension work State Governments were also persuaded to appoint Directors of Extension with subsidy from the Centre Periodical seminars of agricultural extension workers in the country were organised to enable the workers to come into close contact with each other

An agreement was concluded between the Ford Foundation and the Government of India in January 1952 for setting up 5 Extension Training Centres and 15 Intensive Development Blocks in different States of India Each training centre was capable of producing about 50 trained workers Each intensive Development Block extended to an area of 100 villages, where all development activities in the field of agriculture, animal husbandry, social education and health would be concentrated.

In January, 1952, an agreement was concluded between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of India for speeding up India's development projects through the setting up of a number of Community Development Projects Thus, the initiative first taken by the I C A R during the time Munshi was its President, blossomed into the much larger Community Development work which has become one of the major projects in India's national plan for raising the standards of living of the rural population and to step up agricultural production

Although the dissemination of scientific information is one of the important provisions of the I C A R charter till 1950 the Council was concentrating attention on the production of highly technical journals, and the publication of 'Indian Farming', which was fairly technical

For the first time in 1950 the Council's approach to the dissemination of agricultural information was, under the active guidance of Munshi, reshaped from two points of view first, for whom was the information intended, and secondly, how best information can be supplied in a form acceptable to the class of person for whom it is intended Great emphasis was laid on devising proper methods to disseminate agricultural information among farmers and agriculturists As a first step, the 'Indian Farming' was reorganised with new attractive features as a farm journal and was published directly by the Council These efforts have in due course paid ample dividends, as the 'Indian Farming' today is not only one of the most popular farm magazines among progressive farmers of India but also it is self-supporting Foreign technical assistance was also obtained to streamline the I C A R publications and to organise the production of extension type literature for the benefit of farmers In course of time, these measures enabled the I C A R to assume leadership in the production of agricultural information and literature for village level workers and progressive farmers and to organise the setting up of suitable machinery in the different States for the production of such literature in the local languages

The revision of the constitution of the I C A R was only the first step in Munshi's scheme The subsequent steps were the integration of the Central Commodity Committees and the Central Research Institutes into the Council, so that the combined resources of all these bodies could be utilized in a co-ordinated manner, and the entire machinery could be operated by the Ministry with greater speed and effectiveness Unfortunately, Munshi did not remain in harness long enough to take the other steps towards his goal.

Munshi was also anxious to set up an Institute for Agricultural Statistics at the Centre To a certain extent,

the functions of such an Institute were already being discharged by the Statistical Section of the I C A R The Section had carried out extensive field work and had come to be recognised as one of the leading centres of research in sampling techniques in the world Impressed by the activities of the Section, Munshi became anxious that the status of the Section should be raised to that of an Institute Munshi's proposal, however, could not be implemented because of various reasons

Munshi took a number of steps to give a practical shape to his ideas about educational policy in agriculture The first step taken towards reorienting agricultural education was the setting up of a Council of Agricultural Education under the aegis of the I C A R The Council, to begin with, consisted of Munshi as Chairman, Vice-Chancellors of the Universities having under them agricultural colleges, Senior Officials of the I C A R, Directors of Research Institutes, Central Government Officials and Principals of Agricultural and Veterinary Colleges The main function of this Council was to co-ordinate agricultural education and training programmes in the different States and Universities so that a uniform standard of agricultural education in tune with the requirements of the country, might be achieved This Council, immediately after its formation, took steps to revise the syllabus for instruction in agricultural education on co-ordinated lines

Secondly, Munshi continued the Central Agricultural College, located at Delhi which was proposed to be closed, and amalgamated it with the Indian Agricultural Research Institute

Thirdly, he established a number of training courses for agricultural extension workers

The problem of incentives was already being tackled through the initiation of crop competitions During

1950-51, cash prizes of Rs 1,000 each were awarded to competitors who secured the highest yields in rice, wheat and potatoes During 1951-52, the competitions were extended to jowar, bajra, maize and gram, in addition Cash prizes of Rs 5,000 each in addition to a certificate of Krishi Pandit', were awarded to competitors who achieved the highest yields Munshi was greatly impressed by the results achieved and laid greater emphasis on these competitions

Munshi pointed out that the great advantage of such competitions was that it led to a rise in the average yield per acre, in the areas covered by such competitions and as a result increased the total produce of the States concerned He therefore, suggested that in order to enable the farmers to understand the full significance of such competitions and to make large numbers of them actively participate in these, a 'Competition Fortnight' should be observed enthusiastically well in time before sowing As a result of the enthusiasm shown, the total area under competitions which during 1950-51 was 7,000 acres, increased to nearly 1,00,000 acres during 1951-52

Munshi, however, was all along fully aware that not much was going to be achieved in the sphere of agriculture by mere economic and financial measures The drive had to have an emotional mass-appeal which produced an enthusiastic will to work and made devotion to work a matter of religious significance

Munshi believed that the power to move the collective mind to action came not from information and publicity, but from the idea being tabloided into an expressive and significant phrase 'We know the power which the words Satyagraha and 'Quit India' wielded in our recent history, they opened the floodgates of mass response Vana Mahotsava had the good fortune to become such a key

word' It was not unnatural, therefore, that the word 'Land Army' should occur to him representing the idea of a mass effort for implementing the programme of Land Transformation

Munshi was of the view that no scheme of intensive cultivation was going to give appropriate results unless we had an Extension Service with which were associated not merely officials, but also enterprising farmers The nature of Extension work to be done in India was gigantic and it had to be done with our limited means A Land Army or Bhoomi Sena was, therefore, an essential auxilliary to the Extension Service

Munshi stressed the importance of a Land Army in our national economy The Land Army was to consist of two branches The regular branch was to consist of the farmers themselves, while the auxilliary branch was to consist of the urban and the voluntary workers

Munshi, with a view to give a practical shape to his idea of a Land Army, had a constitution drafted for it, laying down its functions, composition and other details

Soon after the constitution of the Land Army had been prepared, Munshi devoted himself vigorously to its implementation The Land Army was inaugurated by the President of India by the collective digging of the Nangloi Trench near Delhi Some students from the Delhi University and some village teachers were the first recruits The villagers soon began to take to collective village effort with enthusiasm The idea has been continuously gaining ground In the Community Projects and the National Extension Blocks, non-officials are taking more and more interest The Shrama-dan idea is now universally welcomed and it should not be forgotten that its early origins are to be traced to the idea of the Land Army

VI

Munshi had realised right from the beginning that the scale of his achievements in office would depend upon the efficiency of the administrative machinery that he had at his command The machinery that he had inherited consisted of a number of unco-ordinated sub-departments, each working more or less independently of the other and, therefore, deeply sensitive to any suggestion of integration. Munshi found that he had taken over not one Ministry but a number of Ministries all loosely hanging directly from him The production agencies for food, cotton and jute were separate and looked upon each other as rivals rather than partners The research and training activities were spread over the various institutions under the I C A R, the Central Commodity Committees and the Central Research Institutes, each jealously guarding its own autonomy The Central Tractor Organisation and the Directorate General of Food were also more or less self-sufficient And over and above, there were the Secretariats of the two Ministries,—the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Agriculture Munshi sized up the situation, practically on sight after taking his oath of office, and decided that his first tasks would be to streamline the administrative machinery, assess the achievements of the Grow-More-Food Campaign and root out corruption

The streamlining of the administrative machinery was a gigantic task, but Munshi attacked it with complete confidence and without fear or favour The first step that he took was to set up under his chairmanship, an Inter-departmental Emergency Committee of the two Ministries, consisting of the Secretary of Food, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Director General of Food, the Vice-Chairman of the I C A R and the Economic and Statistical Adviser.

The Committee was to take decisions on all urgent and pressing matters relating to the two Ministries Thus, at one stroke, the two Ministries were integrated at the highest level, and with the Minister acting as Chairman, there was no room for inter-Ministerial wranglings Secondly, Munshi decided to integrate into the Agriculture Ministry the Special Emergency Branch, which hitherto was working as a separate and independent unit under the Commissioner of Food Production With the transfer of R K Patil to the Planning Commission, Munshi assumed the powers of the Commissioner of Food Production himself and entrusted the execution of the production programmes in food, cotton, jute etc, in an integrated manner, to a single officer, now called the Agricultural Development Commissioner Thirdly, he divided the country into eight regions and placed each region under a Regional Agricultural Production Commissioner who could deal with the States in the region on behalf of the Centre It thus became possible for the Centre to maintain close contact with the actual execution of schemes in the States, to assess the progress made from time to time, and to render help to the executive officer on the spot with the least possible delay Fourthly, he appointed P M Khareghat to act as a single member committee to review the working of the Central Tractor Organization On the basis of the recommendations made by Khareghat, he completely overhauled the organization Fifthly, he amended the constitution of the I C A R so as to enable it to deal more effectively with its responsibilities The Governing Body of the Council now came to have the assistance of two Boards—one of Research and the other of Extension—in involving integrated programmes of work in these two spheres and a Standing Committee was also set up to meet at regular intervals and enforce the policy laid down The

Council and its various administrative bodies now included representatives of forestry and fisheries and of the Central Research Institutes Sixthly, a Commissioner of Extension was appointed at the Centre to co-ordinate the Extension Programme of the country A nation-wide extension service to bridge the gap between the research workers and the farmers was planned Periodical seminars of agricultural extension workers in the country were organized to enable the workers to come into close contact with each other Seventhly, the Central Agricultural Research Institute, the Central Veterinary Research Institute, the Central Forest Research Institute and others were reorganized on modern lines and their activities expanded and their work co-ordinated Finally, the Ministry of Food and the Ministry of Agriculture were amalgamated into a single Ministry of Food and Agriculture with a single Secretary in February 1951

Munshi was also extremely anxious to maintain the good name of the Ministry under his charge and whenever he received any complaints against his officers, he lost no time in enquiring into them There were a number of such complaints investigated by him and in some cases they were found to be justified while in others, the officers were proved to be innocent

In the execution of all these measures designed to improve the administrative machinery of the Ministry, Munshi had a task of enormous magnitude, particularly because of the atmosphere of disunity, parochialism, and rivalry which prevailed in the Ministry when he took charge Munshi was, therefore, very anxious to enforce strict discipline amongst his officers and had enjoined them not to discuss policies which were still in the making within the Ministry with officers outside the Ministry He felt that when any Ministries or Ministry wished to know of

any happenings within his Ministry, they should address either his Secretary or himself instead of trying to get the information from junior officers Munshi also felt that since he had the responsibility for making policy within his sphere and defending it before Parliament, proposals should not leak out, even within Governmental circles, until he had made up his mind This was also the normal Secretarial procedure and worked satisfactorily in so far as relations with other Ministries were concerned There had, however, now come on the scene another body, the members of which had the status of Ministers and the power to make proposals with respect to all Ministries without the responsibility of answering for their actions before Parliament The Commission was newly established, had no precedents to draw upon and was naturally anxious, as all new bodies are, to extend its powers which were not clearly laid down It was not to be expected that Munshi would permit any encroachment on his constitutional privileges The stage was set for a tug-of-war between Munshi and the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission felt that they had to plan, both in the short run and in the long run They therefore desired that no action should be taken until their plans were completed and they had an opportunity to judge any proposals in the context of their plans, and express their views This led to their requiring all Ministries to submit their proposals first to the Planning Commission, and Members of the Commission began to attend meetings of Cabinet Committees and even of the Cabinet All this rendered the task of the Ministries exceedingly difficult, as the Ministries coud not finalise anything without getting the prior approval of the Planning Commission In course of time, the Planning Commission ceased to be the confidential advisers of the Ministries alone and began to make

public addresses to the country in which they canvassed their views on economic policy These views were often opposed to the views of the Ministry concerned and caused it considerable embarrassment when it was called upon to defend its policy before Parliament The Planning Commission also claimed the privilege of secrecy in respect of any advice that it gave to the Ministries, so that it need not come in for blame, if a particular policy of Government became the target of public criticism

Munshi held the view that the Planning Commission had to plan, not execute, that, under the Constitution the parliamentary responsibility of a Minister could not be shared by a body not amenable to such responsibility

Eventually, some of the differences between the Planning Commission and Munshi were ironed out through the intervention of Sardar Patel and Rajaji, and a kind of cease-fire was established between the two As the Planning Commission came to concentrate its energies more and more on the formulation of the First Five-Year Plan, occasions for differences on immediate issues of policy became rare and far between Munshi also took great interest in the plans made for the agricultural sector in the First Five-Year Plan and gave his whole-hearted co-operation to the Planning Commission in their formulation

VII

One would have thought that the administration of two such difficult portfolios as Food and Agriculture, would leave little time for the Minister concerned to devote to any other activities outside the Ministry Not so for Munshi, however He continued to interest himself in a wide range of activities, educational and cultural, found time to write on a variety of subjects, and visited different

centres in order to address meetings and conferences on their account It would not be possible to take note of all these activities, in this review nor would it be appropriate There are two matters, however, to which reference must be made as they show how Munshi was always wide awake about issues on the peripheri of his own responsibilities and endeavoured to secure a solution to them, which would ease of his own difficulties

The first was the fixation of minimum wages in Agriculture The Minimum Wages Act was passed by Parliament earlier and the question of enforcing it was now before Government Though anxious for the minimum wage, Munshi's sense of realism led him to conclude that a disturbance in the traditional wage pattern in Agriculture at that time might open out fresh grounds for conflict between the employers and the labourers, and thereby give a serious setback to the plans for agricultural production He felt that minimum wage fixation in agriculture was inopportune, impracticable and detrimental to the drive for increased production

Munshi's stand in the matter soon received powerful support from a number of State Governments and the dispute between him and the Labour Minister had to be referred to the Planning Commission The Planning Commission appointed a Committee to investigate the whole problem This Committee reached the conclusion that a universal application of Minimum Wages Act was not a practicable proposition at the moment and that minimum wages should be fixed in the first instance only in areas where wages were low due to the existence of exploitative factors It can be stated without hesitation that it was only Munshi's fearless initiative that was responsible for re-opening this question, which having already been decided by Parliament, was considered to be closed

The second was his endeavour to hunt for new sources of revenue, in the hope that the Finance Minister would reciprocate the advice by earmarking them for one or the other of his pet schemes of development The financial resources allocated to his Ministry were naturally limited by budgetary availabilities and he, therefore, thought that the best way to secure an increase in his allocation was to suggest to the Finance Minister new ways of augmenting the budgetary availabilities themselves

One of the new sources of revenue suggested by him was the levy of a Central Surcharge on land revenue or, if possible, on rent, so as to constitute a village development fund Munshi was of the view that for achieving the agricultural production targets under the Five-Year Plan, it was very essential to carry out minor irrigation schemes throughout the country The State Governments had hundreds of schemes for minor works which only awaited finance Munshi suggested that these works should be linked up with a drive to draw out the un-invested savings from the hands of the farmer The Fund could be earmarked for minor irrigation works and communications in the tehsil from which it is collected He felt, that the specific earmarking of the proceeds would blunt the edge of the new levy The people would appreciate that the levy would be utilised for the development of minor works in their own area and that the levy would, therefore, be really paid from the additional return which they were likely to receive from these works He added 'some such move will not be palatable at first, but if it is linked with the production drive as a whole, it will be accepted '

Munshi's proposal in this connection was submitted to the Ministry of Finance He proposed a surcharge of As 6 per acre levied as a 'Village Development Cess' and estimated that it would yield a sum of nearly Rs 9 crores

Since land revenue had remained more or less stable for the last 20 to 25 years in spite of the considerable increase in agricultural prices, its burden had been already lowered substantially A small increase in the burden could not, therefore, be considered inequitable, particularly as agricultural prices had risen appreciably during recent years The proposal was discussed at length at the highest level, but, unfortunately, nothing came out of it in the end

Another such proposal of Munshi was to raise the Excise Duty on matches, the burden of which could be passed on to the consumer by raising the price of match-boxes The price of match-boxse was, at that time, fixed by a 'Gentlemen's Agreement' at 3 pice and 2 pice per box, containing 60 sticks and 40 sticks respectively Munshi proposed that if the manufacture of the 40 sticks match-box was stopped and the price of the 60 sticks match-box was raised from 3 pice to 1 anna, it would be possible to increase the excise revenue by about 7 crores He submitted to the Finance Minister that it would then be possible to allow his Ministry Rs 8 lakhs for Sismal tree plantation, Rs 50 lakhs for afforestation, and another Rs 50 lakhs for the Key Village Schemes every year and yet would leave a substantial amount to the Finance Minister himself for relieving the general deficit This proposal, however, met the same fate as the previous one, as any increase in the Excise Duty on match boxes was considered to be a burden on the poor-man's pocket

Munshi also kept a continuous watch on the general economic situation in the country and made detailed suggestions to the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister from time to time Munshi's approach to economic problems was characterised by complete absence of dogmatism When the country was faced with an acute inflationary pressure which followed the outbreak of the Korean War,

Munshi probed deeply into the problem and made a comprehensive diagnosis of the whole situation

While he considered it essential to control inflation, his main advice was 'to promote an expansionist economy and utilise the production potential of the country' The only method to achieve this objective, according to him, was 'regulation of prices in a manner consistent with increase in production coupled with deflationary measures' This involved (a) continuance of controls, (b) regulation of prices in a manner which would provide sufficient incentive to production, (c) ruthless economy in Governmental expenses all over the country, including the giving up, if necessary, of cherished programmes, and (d) draining off the surplus income in the hands of non-investing classes

Thus, Munshi's policy provided for 'a certain amount of elasticity in the operation of controls, making them more palatable to producers and facilitating their enforcement' Regarding economy in Governmental expenditure, he suggested that the only way was that 'the Government of India, for a specified period and with immediate effect and, if necessary, at all cost of prestige and ideology, should abandon or reverse schemes which do not directly bear on (a) maintenance of law and order, (b) defence, (c) immediate increase in production, and (d) maintenance of existing services at minimum cost'

It is obvious that Munshi was not in favour of schemes like the introduction of complete prohibition, which reduced the revenues of the Government Besides he was anxious that the classes which had benefited from higher prices should save a portion of their incomes and utilise it for capital investment That is why he proposed the levy of a graded surcharge on Government receipts through land revenue or rent, the funds accruing from which could be earmarked for expenditure on schemes of land improve-

ment in the concerned village itself as far as possible and in the neighbourhood, where necessary.

Drastic proposals are, however, not popular with a Government which operates on the principle of the least common denominator Munshi's mind, besides, often leaped to conclusions at which others could only arrive after long and tortuous processes of thought and action The excursions of a mere Food and Agriculture Minister in the lofty realms of high finance were also not too welcome The proposals of Munshi, therefore, in these spheres did not influence the course of events, and merely remained as evidence of the sharpness of his intellect and the versatality of his interests

VIII

In the light of what has happened since 1952, the achievements of the Food Ministry during the time when Munshi was the Minister in charge of Food and Agriculture may not appear very spectacular

But it is undeniable that Munshi converted the Ministry of Food and Agriculture into an instrument of achievements He co-ordinated the departments, combined the Grow More Food Campaign with activities relating to cash-crop production, produced the Integrated Production Plan, and concentrated the Grow More Food activities to irrigated lands and developed minor irrigation It was Munshi who drafted the new constitution of the I C A R and reorganised it, to use his words, as a super-university of research and extension, introduced, for the first time in the activities of the Ministry, the setting up of an extension board separate from the research board, and, under the direction and control of the I C A R vigorously co-ordinat-

ed the activities of the Co-ordination Committee as well as the agricultural activities of all the States

The central institutes were all brought into a line with the I C A R Forestry was reorganised and a new National Forest Policy replaced the old Forest Policy of India which had been in existence for 59 years A Board of Forestry was set up and it translated the National Forest Policy into action The Forest Research Institute at Dehra Dun was made into an international centre, the vast campaign of Vana Mahotsava brought soil erosion in the forefront of national problems He brought the menace of the Rajasthan desert before the country and founded the first Desert Nursery at Jodhpur He gave to animal husbandry a new orientation *Gosadan* and Key Village schemes, which were merely on the files, assumed country-wide importance The I A R I, generally known as the Pusa Institute, was started, and it was at his instance that the Pusa Institute embarked upon a large-scale research in rust-resisting varieties of wheat

It was not merely in administrative vigour and organising power that these achievements were effected, but with his gift of formula-making, he produced a comprehensive term in 'Land Transformation' which, during his time, made the officers feel a sense of unity

When Munshi came on the scene, the food situation in the country was at its lowest ebb and from May 1950 to June 1951, when deliveries under the U S A Wheat-Loan began to come in, it was the most tragic year There was the pledge not to import any foodgrains by the end of 1951, and a control system kept out the marketable surplus from the market It was a period when surplus States would not part with their surplus and the deficit States were demanding more and more

When the wheat supplies were restricted and when the

shipping facilities of the world stood at the lowest, day and night he worked and pulled the country out of the most difficult crisis it had gone through But for the drive and the resourcefulness which he brought to bear upon the problems, everyone was afraid that the tragedy of Bengal would have been repeated in several parts of India

In a letter to Munshi dated 14th February 1952, President Dr Rajendra Prasad emphasised the great service he had rendered in averting famine

> I know with what anxieties you have had to work these last twelve months, often in the face of unhelpful criticism It was in no small measure due to your initiative and drive that the tragedy of Bengal was not re-enacted in Bihar last year and in Gujarat this year The public will no doubt appreciate your efforts when they become aware of what has been accomplished but I feel I ought to convey an expression of my own thanks to you and through you to all those who have co-operated with you in bringing about this improvement

CHAPTER X

GOVERNOR OF UTTAR PRADESH

I

When K M Munshi intervened in the debate in the Constituent Assembly over the Article in the Constitution relating to Governors, little could he have foreseen that it would be his lot within three years to 'exercise some influence' as the Governor of the biggest State in the country Much water had flowed down the Ganga and the Yamuna since the Constituent Assembly discussed the position and powers of the Governor in a democratic republic And speaking at the Institute of Public Administration of the Patna University in 1956, Munshi underlined the duties of a Governor thus

> The Governor has the very difficult task of carrying out his duties within the limitations imposed upon him by the Constitution He has to keep in touch with matters of importance happening in the State, or in the administration By exercising his personal influence, he has also to help his Ministers to make both the administration and the democratic experiment a success He is the watch-dog of constitutional propriety and the link which binds the State to the Centre, thus securing the constitutional unity of the country Yet he has also to keep a watch over the barometric fluctuations of local problems and public opinion so as to form a clear opinion of the public reactions to the policies of his Government as well as to apprise his Chief Minister of what his own views are The Governor has also in a remote, but

> imponderable, way to look after the interests of the services and to help in seeing that they maintain happy and loyal relations with the Ministry

Apart from being a succinct summary of the functions of a Governor, it is a resume of what Munshi himself did as Governor of Uttar Pradesh for five years

Even as early as September 1951, Munshi had decided not to stand for election to Parliament though there would have been no difficulty whatsoever to find a seat for him from either Gujarat or Bombay city It was his intention to devote some time to literature and culture which he could not do as an active minister

After the general elections were over, Munshi had an interview with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in the first week of May 1952 The Prime Minister asked him to accept a Governorship Munshi felt unreconciled to the idea He consulted his wife who was emphatic that he should accept it Dr Rajendra Prasad also persuaded Munshi to take it When he knew that Uttar Pradesh was to be the State, Munshi consented Let Munshi recount in his own words what Uttar Pradesh meant to him

> From this State had come Motilalji, Malaviyaji, Panditji and Tandonji whom I knew and had known so well There were few basic weaknesses, administratively it was efficient, politically it was solid Lucknow was a city of culture, poetry and music The several universities would claim me as their Chancellor Uttar Pradesh was the home of learning, of Sanskrit and Hindi The land of the Ganga and the Yamuna with their hallowed banks had wonderful associations for me There was Ayodhya and Mathura where God Himself had descended in life Prayag was there, the gateway to the land of *pitris*, and Kashi the oldest seat of learning in the

world's history There Nandadevi and Parashram reared their mighty peaks of silvery snow, and Kashi Vishveshwar and Badri-Kedareshwar sat enthroned holding sway over innumerable hearts in countless ages Once it had included Aryavarta with its throbbing heart of the Naimisha forest, wherefrom had flowed all that was great and noble and true in the aspiration of man And there was the Himalayas too, *devatatma*—of the Divine Soul—the Supreme Lord of Mountains

Munshi tells an interesting story about his going over as Governor of Uttar Pradesh He consulted N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar, a dear friend of his, who advised Munshi not to take up the Governorship of that State He said, "Pant is there, I know him well, I know you well too The two of you will soon come into conflict with each other " "I am going there because Pantji is there", Munshi replied "He knows me well, I know him well, never could I conceive of a conflict between us " So Munshi accepted the office After thirty months of close association with Pandit Pant as Governor Munshi only emphasised the correctness of his decision Of such rich associations is life made, says Munshi

Munshi's friendship with Pandit Pant dates back to the thirties when the latter was the Congress Premier of the United Provinces Sardar Patel used to call periodic conferences of the Congress Premiers to coordinate the policies and programmes of the diverse ministries, and Munshi had, at Sardar's request, served as the Secretary of the conference Since then, both of them had worked together in the Constituent Assembly and there had grown a bond of deep and abiding affection between the two

With Pandit Pant's successor, Dr Sampurnanand, Munshi's relations were equally cordial and happy Apart

from long-standing personal friendship and political camaraderie, the two have many interests in common. Both are keenly interested in literature and culture, both are great lovers of Sanskrit and of India's glorious heritage

Munshi was no stranger to the other ministers of the Cabinet Some of them had been his colleagues in the Constituent Assembly It is no wonder therefore that Munshi felt completely at home in Uttar Pradesh and that his relations with the Ministers moved on oiled castors

In this atmosphere of cordiality, Munshi laid his vast experience as a politician and administrator, his knowledge of Constitution and constitutional law and his erudition at the disposal of the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet Munshi could realise the tremendous responsibilities that devolved on the ministers and he was anxious to do his bit in the great task of rebuilding the country The ministers knew him as an elder statesman of the Congress and came to look upon him as an elder brother Far from resenting his interference, they sought his advice on all important problems and benefited themselves

Munshi toured the State frequently and widely and he used to meet people of all shades of opinion and in all walks of life He could thus feel the pulse of the people and acquaint himself with their reactions to the policies of the Government He used to send lengthy notes to the Chief Minister conveying his impressions This was of great help to the ministry in gauging public opinion. Whenever questions of importance arose, he used to send detailed letters to the minister concerned There was complete reciprocity between the ministers and Munshi. He performed to the full his political function to be the constitutional head of the government He maintained the dignity, the stability and the collective responsibility

of the Government and exercised substantial and helpful influence

II

Munshi's governorship will always be remembered for the silent transformation he brought about in the atmosphere of the Universities He was the Chancellor of five Universities and he made it crystal clear that the Chancellor was the real head of the Universities and not merely a figurehead

The situation that confronted the new Chancellor was indeed disquieting Student indiscipline was the order of the day Communist cliques had captured certain student unions, and strikes and demonstrations disfigured academic life There was utter lawlessness and anarchy An attempt was made to break up the annual Convocation of the Allahabad University

The trouble-shooters in the Universities had evidently counted without Munshi The man who as Home Minister had stood up to the blandishments of the Communists of Bombay was not going to run away from their half-baked disciples of Uttar Pradesh He faced the students, addressed many meetings and pointed out the error of their ways Munshi realised that indiscipline among students was not a sporadic distemper but was a general epidemic He supported the Vice-Chancellors in all the steps they took to curb indiscipline

He also organised periodical conferences of Vice-Chancellors and Deans of all the Universities in Uttar Pradesh Many steps were formulated to put down indiscipline among students Munshi also tried personal contact and participated in many functions of the students.

Students used to be invited to the Government House and within a couple of years, Munshi had brought student indiscipline under control

The Vice-Chancellors' Conference did something more than tackle the problem created by indiscipline prevailing in the Universities It brought the Vice-Chancellors and the Deans of the Universities together, to discuss common problems, to compare notes on the progress made; to consider the ways and means of preventing reduplication of costly specialised studies, and to develop an awareness of the problems relating to academic standards and the welfare of teachers and students.

Munshi started another innovation and that was the Chancellor's Camp where students and teachers spent a few weeks as guests in the Government House The students and teachers alike felt that they were in the atmosphere of an *ashram*; not in the physical sense, for the Government House is exactly the contrary of an *ashram*, but in the sense that all of them had a collective urge to catch a glimpse, however faint, of a dedicated life One point, however, was emphasised almost every day More interest should be taken in the personal life of the student by the teacher; and the student should develop an attitude characterised by humility, open inquisitive mind and service

Munshi set before the Camp as its main objectives that the universities should be national temples of learning and culture, that they should be laboratories for reintegrating national values to suit modern needs, and that they should be *ashrams* with a soul and collective will leading to a dedicated life Other points were also stressed For instance, the pursuit of higher knowledge, the study of different aspects of our national life as also of the traditions, values and achievements of our land;

creative effort which would embody the values of our national culture in our outlook and character, the study of the values and patterns of life in foreign countries to enable us to fit into a world community. But above all, importance was attached to the need for collective endeavour of teachers and students alike to transform material, moral and spiritual life.

The Camp served a very useful purpose, it brought some of the teachers and students of the Universities together in search of certain common objectives. During the Camp they spent two-three weeks together in *shramdan,* prayers, *Gita-path* (reciting the *Gita*), lectures, seminars and discussions on various subjects.

Munshi had ever been a staunch believer in the autonomy of a university. In the field of learning men should be free to pursue their own line of thought, or to express their own opinions, so long as they are on an academic level. But Munshi made it clear that the autonomy of a university did not mean the dictatorship of party bosses in the colleges, who canvass support by playing with the future of junior teachers, it did not mean the control of certain groups who have patronage in their hands. Throughout his tenure of office, the autonomy of a university meant freedom from governmental control, freedom to pursue learning in all its aspects, freedom to express opinions academically on every subject at will, and freedom to regulate the academic life through agencies in which people, who have the sole interests of the university at heart, have a place. The autonomy of a university, which Munshi emphasised, was the autonomy of all teachers and non-teachers who have devoted themselves to higher learning, or who are able to develop an attitude to university life untainted by self-interest.

Reorganisation of the Universities also went on apace A notable instance was the Roorkee University which under the stewardship of A N Khosla, an outstanding engineer and a former *alumnus* of Roorkee, bids fair to become the best Engineering College in all Asia An Institute of Hindi was set up at the Agra University for the development of Hindi into a language of power A Sanskrit University was organised at Banaras and a University was set up at Gorakhpur

III

Munshi gave a new twist to the activities of the Post-War Services Reconstruction Fund Trust The Trust was established in December 1946 by the Government of India for the benefit of ex-servicemen who had served abroad in World War II Munshi was the Chairman of the Trust for the five years he was Governor of Uttar Pradesh During the five years, the Trust made rapid strides in organising assistance to ex-servicemen beneficiaries As the reports show, the Trust had, till the 31st March, 1955, spent Rs 5,31,524 on educational stipends, Rs 9,14,729 by way of grant and loan for providing colonisation facilities to the beneficiaries, Rs 8,70,814 towards Soldiers' Boards, Rs 1,54,674 for library and rest houses For medical relief to the beneficiaries, the Trust constructed 13 wards in different hospitals in the State and has now an elaborate programme for building more wards In addition, it established a new scheme by which every beneficiary of the Trust would, in serious cases, get medical expenses as well as treatment in one or other of the hospitals

The Trust, under Munshi's advice, embarked upon a plan of setting up Land Schools for the benefit of the sons of its ex-servicemen beneficiaries The School, in the form it took, was the result of various experiments which are being carried on in the country, with some of which Munshi has been closely associated The central idea is 'Education through Work' The training which it gives is in the composite art of Land Transformation

The aim of the Land School is to provide an education in an atmosphere of healthy discipline, which will give young men faith in Land Transformation as a philosophy the desire to learn and preach the Gospel of the Dirty Hands the urge to rebuild the life of the village on healthy lines the capacity to reclaim land and cultivate it intensively, to follow improved methods of farming and animal husbandry, to learn how to build and run rural workshops

The School was opened on 20th January 1953 It has a distinctiveness of its own When the School began its work on 1st May in right earnest, the students were there and ready to be trained The headache was the teachers Most of them had faint appreciation of the meaning and purpose of such a school, but they cheerfully started a course of self-education Munshi succeeded in persuading Dr Maganbhai Patel and Professor Chhotabhai Patel of Anand Institute to come and lend their assistance

Within a short time, the Land School registered considerable progress The school had three farms, a large dairy, a precision tools factory and a building trade section Apart from its own activities, the School is now associated with the Technical Corporation, a Kendra of the Mahila Sahayak Sangh and a N E S project covering 103 villages

IV

Munshi was highly successful in bringing the Government House into touch with the people During the British days there was an iron curtain screening the Government House from the people It was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for an average Indian to enter the portals of the Government House Munshi threw the Government House open to the public on national festival days like the Independence Day, Dipavali and Gandhi Jayanti There used to be fireworks and the common people flocked in their thousands The Government House became a symbol of the new urges and aspirations animating the people

Munshi has ever been noted for his easy accessibility He also loves to entertain guests As a Governor, he became a super-host on a mass scale The scope of hospitality was enlarged Such diverse groups as the delegates to the Working Journalists' Conference, to a Christian Conference were alike entertained at the Government House

Munshi converted the Government House into a cultural centre Music and dance performances were frequent He constructed the Gupta room in the Government House, reminiscent of the Imperial Guptas of ancient India The mural decorations and the period furniture were supplied by the Uttar Pradesh Cottage Industries Association Distinguished foreign visitors like Earl Attlee were greatly impressed by the Gupta room

Through his Kulapati's letters which were translated into Hindi and widely published, Munshi rediscovered Uttar Pradesh to the people of the State Vanamahotsava and Gopashtami became almost national festivals in which the people participated He recaptured the atmosphere of Tulsidas

Above all the Governorship enabled Munshi to realise his early ambitions To him Uttar Pradesh had ever been what Italy and Greece had been to Goethe and Byron Munshi lived once again in the living memories of Aryavarta, the Homeland of India's immortal spirit He saw the places of historical interest Kalanjar, Fatehpur Sikhri, the Taj, Rani Lakshmibai's palace and others, lived in the midst of majestic Himalayas and on the crowded banks of the sacred Ganga, worshipped at the shrines of Badrinath and Kashi Vishvanath He paid homage to Lord Buddha at Lumbhini Sarnath and Kushinagar He invoked the memories of the divine Cowherd at Gokhul, Mathura and Brindhavan and of Radha, His eternal bride, at Barsana her home He planted trees at Giri Govardhan, the Lord of Mountains He went on pilgrimage to several spots associated with Veda Vyas, to Kalpi where the Master was born, to Hastinapur, where he inspired and guided the Pandavas, to Mana where he composed the *Mahabharat;* to the Naimisha forest where he heard his immortal work recited when Shaunaka's Sacrifice was held

The young student of the Baroda College who was inspired by the vision of the Motherland, the man of letters who recaptured the glorious heritage of India in novels and plays, and the successful lawyer who threw up a lucrative practice and marched to prison, had the satisfaction of not only seeing but of directing his dreams of a new India taking concrete shape in the State hallowed by the memories of Sri Krishna and Buddha, of Veda Vyasa and the Pandavas, and he could legitimately look back with pride on the glorious contribution he has made not only to the struggle for freedom but also to the consolidation of that freedom

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